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ABSTRACT

A study investigated what can be learned about the strengths and weaknesses of students' writing from direct assessment of writing performance and knowledge of overall student performance. In the first part of the study, all 13 school districts in Alaska participated in an interdistrict writing assessment procedure intended to measure the overall strengths and weaknesses of tenth graders' writing skills. Nine school districts participated in the second part of the study which correlated 668 tenth graders' performance in the direct writing assessment to their performance on standardized tests and to their grade point average. The subjects responded to a writing prompt concerning friendship and were given two 50-minute periods to write and revise their responses. The strengths and weaknesses of the subjects' writing abilities were analyzed for each of six writing traits: ideas and content; organization; voice; word choice; sentence structure; and conventions. Results indicated that: (1) the relationships among the six writing traits were higher than the relationship with the standardized test result; (2) the strongest associations between writing traits and test scores occur with "sentence structure" and "conventions"; and (3) the weakest association between writing traits and test scores occurs with "ideas and content" and "voice." Findings suggest that while the traits are strongly interrelated, they are in fact measuring different components of writing. (Sixteen tables of data are included; appendixes include a list of participating districts, the agenda for early training sessions, definitions of scoring methods, the analytical scoring guide, department of education letters and instruction, participating teachers' comments, contingency tables, and interdistrict writing assessment statistics.) (RS)

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ALASKA WRITING ASSESSMENT PILOT SURVEY

1988-89

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Alaska's 1989 Direct Writing Assessment
An Introduction

Nationwide, many states are augmenting their standardized assessments of students' basic skills in language arts with direct assessments of actual writing samples. Most often, the argument for use of a writing sample is that it provides educators with a more concrete picture of actual writing skills. That is to say, rather than having students respond in a multiple choice manner to questions about writing, we ask students to write. This method of assessment provides students the opportunity to demonstrate their skill in effective use of grammatical and other writing conventions, their organizational and persuasive powers in writing, and their fluency of expression. Furthermore, the results of direct assessment are broadly useful. They can be used for program evaluation by either validating existing program successes or by pointing to the need for curricular change. Results can be used by teachers in targeting specific instructional methods and student activities in areas where there are weaknesses. In addition, students get direct feedback regarding the strengths and/or weaknesses of their actual writing performance.

New Jersey, Washington, Illinois, California, and Oregon are among the many states who have begun to augment their traditional assessments of language arts with direct assessment of student writing samples. They have used a variety of writing assessment scoring procedures including holistic, primary trait, and analytical methods. Some states have conducted their writing assessment in conjunction with standardized tests of language ability while others have kept their writing assessment separate from standardized tests. Some states assess writing abilities of high school students only whereas others also include elementary and middle school students. A common purpose of these assessment efforts, however, is to describe the condition of students' writing skills and to begin to monitor skill development over time.

In April 1989, the Alaska Department of Education conducted its first interdistrict direct assessment of tenth graders' writing skills. The purposes for this assessment were:

1) To determine the feasibility of conducting a statewide interdistrict writing assessment;

2) To gather direct writing assessment results for participating districts;

3) To investigate the relationship between direct writing performance and standardized test performance; and

4) To gauge the interest and acceptability of doing writing assessments among Alaskan districts.

Thirteen school districts from across the state participated in this pilot study. (Participating districts and their district contacts are

listed in Appendix I). Given the purposes, the pilot was divided in two parts. All school districts participated in Part One, an interdistrict writing assessment intended to measure the overall strengths and weaknesses of tenth graders' writing skills.

Part Two of the study, in which nine school districts participated, correlated tenth graders' performance in the direct writing assessment to their performance on a standardized test and to their grade point average (GPA). The purpose of the correlational study was to examine the relationship between different assessments of writing performance and knowledge with overall student performance. A crucial question for the overall study was "What can we learn about the strengths and weaknesses of a student's writing performance from direct writing assessment that we may not learn otherwise?" A second policy level question also considered was "What useful planning information do we gain?"

In the pilot study, 668 tenth graders responded to a common writing "prompt" or topic over a two day period between March 27 and April 7, 1989. Teachers reported that students generally wrote a rough draft on the first day and revised it on the second day. The writing topic selected by contact teachers from each participating district and Department of Education specialists was:

> We all need friends. Describe a time in your life (either real or imaginary) when friendship really counted. The people you describe may be real or imaginary.

Chapter 1: A Brief History of Writing Assessment in Alaska

Interest in the direct assessment of student writing in Alaska first grew out of the training of the Alaska State Writing Consortium. The Consortium, founded in 1981, sponsors two, three and four such institutes for educators that focus on writing as a process. Teachers initially involved in ASWC institutes practiced and discussed holistic scoring as part of their summer training. As more teachers practiced that method and returned to summer institutes to share what they had learned, there was a growing dissatisfaction with holistic scoring. "So if a paper gets a "3" what does that mean, really?" was often heard. Other reservations were voiced - "How can I give this student, who is low achiever a score that reflects the fact that he has great ideas, but needs a lot of work on spelling?" "How do we make this more meaningful to students who put a lot of effort into responding to a prompt and get back a "2" and a little key to look what a "2" means?" "I need more clear specific diagnostic information." After three years of introducing teachers only to a holistic evaluation method, the Consortium coordinator and leadership decided it was time to learn about other ways to assess writing.

In January 1985, the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory sponsored the "Pacific Northwest Writing Assessment Conference". Skilled experts from across the country were brought together to help educational policy makers in the Northwest to review, consider and implement writing assessment in their states. With the leadership of Department of Education specialists, the ASWC sent five Alaskans (Dr. Peter Larson and Lois Jones, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District; Caroline Linse, Lower Kuskokwim School District; Marlys Henderson, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District; and Dave Dossett, Southeast Island School District) to present how their own district-wide efforts in holistic scoring operated in a large semi-urban district and a rural bilingual district. In addition, they were to learn about other forms of assessment and share their insights with the rest of the ASWC. The conference was a landmark event, providing these leaders in Alaskan education a broad perspective of the issues as well as the practical strategies to implement alternative forms of writing assessment.

To begin to spread the word about analytical assessment and its comparative advantages over holistic methods, the same conference team presented sessions at the Small Schools Conference in October 1985. The Writing Consortium Board also formed a sub-committee on Writing Assessment, chaired by Dr. Peter Larson, and began plans to offer 1 day presentations in the 1986 summer institutes detailing and practicing analytical assessment methods. The call went out to all ASWC districts, inquiring whether they were interested in being part of the sub-committee, and in receiving training in analytical assessment. Eight school districts enthusiastically responded and voiced their interest in a long-term commitment to writing assessment. A three day training session was planned and co-sponsored by the ASWC and the Department of Education in late January 1986. Twenty three teachers and administrators came to Juneau to be trained by Interwest Applied Research consultants from Portland, Oregon. Each participant brought 12 papers from 5th and

6th graders to use in the scoring session. An agenda of that early training session is contained in Appendix II. It is worth noting that three of the teachers who participated in the 1989 interdistrict assessment were present at the historic training in 1986.

Based on the success of that January 1986 training, several districts enthusiastically embraced on-going analytical assessment methods. Fairbanks, Valdez, Kenai, Sitka, Yukon Flats and Lower Kuskokwim districts began to build cadres of trained scoring teams. Further presentations were made by those initially trained teachers at the 1987 Small Schools Conference, the NEA Conference, and all the ASHC Summer Institutes. Peter Larson and Marlys Henderson returned to Portland under ASHC sponsorship to learn how to efficiently administer an analytical assessment on a large scale involving big districts and many papers. They continued to provide leadership and direction to the Consortium as the number of teachers who became trained in analytical assessment increased. As analytical methods became institutionalized in summer institutes in 1987-1989, the formal ASHC sub-committee has been replaced by other committees dealing with emerging issues. The 10 member Consortium board remains highly committed to effective ways to evaluate student writing. In 1989, they drafted a Position Paper on standardized assessment, urging the State Board of Education to seriously consider direct writing assessment and other alternative forms of evaluating student achievement and performance. The 1989 Interdistrict Writing Assessment Pilot was made possible due to the concerned commitment of the Consortium to work with the Department of Education on assessment issues.

Chapter 2: The Analytical Assessment Model

As previously indicated, there are a variety of scoring methods available to assess writing performance including holistic, primary trait, and analytical. Briefly, holistic scoring involves reading a paper for an overall impression regardless of varying skills on specific traits. Primary trait scoring assumes that all writing is done for an audience and that one can focus on the single trait that makes that particular piece writing successful. Analytical scoring assumes that it is possible to define the characteristics of good writing ahead of time and then score a piece of writing according to the strengths and weaknesses of each of those traits. A more detailed description of each method is included in Appendix III. After much research and review, Alaska chose the analytical assessment method for the following reasons:

1. It has become generally accepted throughout the state and by the Alaska State Writing Consortium;

2. The results it yields include extensive diagnostic information about a student's writing performance;

3. It helps students clearly understand what qualities are important in good writing;

4. It helps beginning writers establish an orderly, systematic way to edit and revise their writing;

5. It helps teachers design writing instruction based on the qualities they wish to see demonstrated;

6. It helps parents, students and others understand how student writing is evaluated;

7. It provides consistency in the way teachers rate student writing;

8. It provides a common vocabulary that educators, students, and parents can all use when talking about writing and writing instruction.

The analytic scoring method selected enumerates six distinct traits, each of which is scored individually. The traits are:

<u>Ideas and Content</u> - How interesting is the paper? How well developed are the ideas? Is the writer clear and thoughtful? Does the writer know what he/she is talking about?

<u>Organization</u> - Is there a good opening in the paper? Does the paper proceed in a logical fashion? Are there enough details to make sense without excessive repetition? Are the transitions effective?

Voice - Does the paper speak directly to the reader? Does the paper convey the writer's enthusiasm? Is the writing natural, compelling, and honest? Does the paper evoke genuine feeling in the reader?

Word Choice - Does the choice of words convey meaning in an interesting natural way? Do the words evoke strong imagery? Does the writer use language in a fresh and delightful manner? Is the writing fun to read?

Sentence Structure - Is there an easy flow and rhythm to the paper? Is the sentence length varied to add interest to the paper? Does the writing sound natural and fluent?

Conventions - Does the writer's use of standard writing conventions (grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and paragraphing) enhance the readability of the paper?

Each trait is scored on a five point scale, with 5 the highest possible score and 1 the lowest. Each trait is explicitly defined at the 5, 3, and 1 levels, although the raters also score papers at the 4 and 2 levels. These detailed definitions for levels 1, 3, and 5 of the scoring guide distinguish effective from ineffective writing, and enable the raters to work from a common understanding of these qualities. A copy of the complete scoring guide appears in Appendix IV. In addition, each trait will be fully described and explained in Chapter Five.

The analytical scoring guide has been found to translate easily into use by both teachers and students. For example, it is significant to note that following the first statewide analytical writing assessment in Oregon, many teachers began to voluntarily use the analytical scoring guide in their own classrooms, and some districts began to use the guide to conduct local analytical assessments. Similarly, many Alaska teachers now use the analytical scoring guide in their classrooms.

Chapter 3: Assessment and Scoring Procedures

Prompt Administration

From March 27 to April 7 1989, designated teachers from the thirteen participating school districts administered the writing sample over a sequential two day period convenient to school schedules. Depending on the size of the school district, between 13 and 150 tenth grade students completed a writing sample in response to the pre-selected prompt. Again, the prompt for the 1989 writing assessment was:

> We all need friends. Describe a time in your life (either real or imaginary) when friendship really counted. The people you describe may be real or imaginary.

Before Day One of the assessment, students were informed about their participation and given a letter from the Department of Education describing the purpose of the assessment. Teachers with students participating had also been given a letter from the Department describing the purpose of the study and the details of the prompt administration. Copies of student and teacher letters and instructions from the Department of Education appear in Appendix V. Each day of the assessment, students had free access to a dictionary and a thesaurus if they wanted to use them. On Day One, teachers gave the students the prompt and instructions orally and in writing, and answered any simple questions they had. Students then had 50 minutes to write a draft of their paper, which was collected at the end of the period and stapled to the instruction sheet.

On Day Two, students had an additional 50 minutes to revise, finalize, and recopy their drafts. At the end of the assessment period, both the rough and final drafts were collected and stapled to the instruction sheet. To ensure that scoring would be anonymous, students' names were recorded on the instruction sheet rather than the writing sample itself. Although the administration procedures for the writing assessment generally reflect an instructional process advocated by the Alaska State Writing Consortium, students were not explicitly directed to "use the writing process" since not all school districts or participating teachers were familiar with the process.

Training Procedures

Contact teachers, who had been responsible for collecting the writing samples within their respective districts, met in Anchorage on April 10, 11, & 12 1989, to be trained in analytical assessment procedures and to score the 668 students' writing samples. The twelve teachers who made up the scoring team had varying degrees of experience with writing assessment. Some had no direct experience, some had experience with holistic methods, and several had been using analytical assessment in their classrooms. Three had extensive experience, having been involved with district wide analytical assessment of writing for three or four years. All teachers were high school English teachers, were familiar with the writing process, and had used it in their classrooms. Their overall experience and familiarity with research and the issues of writing instruction facilitated their understanding of the assessment training and scoring.

Training was conducted by two consultants from Interwest Applied Research, based in Beaverton, Oregon. Both trainers had worked extensively with Oregon's statewide writing assessment efforts and were familiar with effective training and scoring procedures. The following training model was used:

At the beginning of the training session, teachers were familiarized with the strengths and weaknesses of each of the six traits to be used in the assessment. Sample papers were read at each scoring level (1-5) and subtle nuances of distinction were pointed out. Teachers, as a group, then read and scored numerous sample student papers representative of each trait at each of the various scoring levels. Extensive time was spent discussing each teachers' reasons for scoring a paper a certain way. Each paper was read by all teachers and more time was spent reaching consensus with no more than a 1 point difference in scores between the teachers. For example, if most of the teachers scored a paper at 3 and 4 for the trait "Organization" and two teachers scored it at 2, they would share their reasons for scoring it as such, refer to the scoring guide to back up their opinions, and finally agree on the best score for that trait on that particular paper. Teachers were required to verbally defend their scores based upon the scoring guide, which was especially important when the scores differed by more than one point. With practice, widely discrepant scoring diminished and in a short time teachers grew increasingly more confident in their use and interpretation of the scoring guide.

The goal of this training was to ensure accuracy and consistency in scoring. A by-product was a team philosophy about the qualities of good writing. It is this by-product, the healthy professional discussion about the qualities of each paper, that many teachers particularly favor about the analytical form of assessment. Across any district, teachers going through this process strengthens a common approach to curriculum and instruction. Repeated practice and discussion during the April training session ensured that the scoring team would develop a common understanding of the scoring model. By all accounts and feedback, the training session for this study was very successful. Participating teachers' comments are included in Appendix VI.

Scoring Procedures

Scoring the papers was a two day process for the twelve participating teachers. Before teachers began to read and score the tenth grade papers, they were introduced to the use of the scoring form and informed what to do for invalid or "off topic" papers. In addition, teachers were requested to flag any papers that revealed potential crisis situations. Experience in and outside Alaska has shown that sometimes students will use the writing sample opportunity to ask for help or to reveal personal crises. The writing sample may sometimes show that counseling should be given to the student writer. Finally, teachers were asked to keep an eye out for good examples of representative papers to include in this report.

The schedule for reading and scoring each day was six 50-minute reading and scoring periods interspersed with 10 minute breaks and a lunch break. Each teacher read and scored approximately 10 to 11 papers per hour. Each paper was read by two different teachers, resulting in two sets of scores for each paper. Approximately 660 papers were read,

making a total of 1,300 readings in the two day scoring session. After the first reading, teachers covered the first set of scores with an opaque label so that the second reading could be done independently of the first. Each teacher was assigned a rater number to record on the scoring form, which helped if there were questions later. After the papers had been read and scored, they were checked by the consultants to make sure that the scores for each trait were no more than one point apart. Papers that were discrepant by more than one point on any trait were read a third time and re-scored for those traits. Overall, the discrepancy rate for individual traits was fairly low (from 5% to 7% over the two day period), which means that inter-rater agreement was high.

Chapter 4: The Correlational Study

A correlational component was included in this pilot project to examine the relationship between a standardized assessment of writing ability and knowledge and a direct assessment of students' writing performance. This component was included to investigate the question "What can we learn about the strengths and weaknesses of a student's writing performance from direct writing assessment that we may not learn otherwise?" Nine school districts across the state participated in this part of the study. They include Anchorage, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Iditarod, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Kuspuk, Northwest Arctic, Southeast Island, and Valdez. A total of 453 students are represented in this part of the study, although there was missing data for some of them.

In addition to a writing sample for each tenth grader, participating school districts submitted grade point averages (GPA) and normal curve equivalents for the language score on a standardized test. GPA data were collected to get a sense of the overall academic performance of the students included in the pilot project. On the writing assessment (Part One), individual scores were determined for each of the six traits. In addition, these averaged scores were totalled to elicit a "total writing average score". The quotes are used advisedly since the intent of analytical assessment is to measure the traits separately. While the total writing score does provide an overall view of writing performance, it should be interpreted cautiously. The intent here was to find the best single measure for correlational purposes. Tables 1, 2, & 3 depict the means and standard deviations of each of the three separate measures (Total Writing Score, GPA, and Standardized Test). Tables 4, 5, & 6 are frequency distributions that graphically illustrate the range of scores for each measure. GPA results, (Tables 1 & 4) indicate that the students in this pilot perform above average in school (if we assume that a 2.00 is average). This finding is corroborated by the standardized test results (Tables 2 & 5) which also indicate that these students perform slightly above average. The direct writing assessment results differ (Table 3 & 6) in that they indicate average performance in these students' writing performance.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation for GPA

X_1 : GPA

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef Var:	Count:
2.552	.806	.04	.649	31.56	406
Minimum:	**Maximum:**	**Range:**	**Sum:**	**Sum Squared:**	**Missing:**
0	4	4	1036.27	2907.755	47

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation for Standardized Test

X_1 : stand. total					
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
54.46	19.225	.972	369.596	35.301	391
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum Squared:	* Missing:
0	99	99	21294	1303821.16	62

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation for Total Writing Average

X_1 : total writing avg.					
Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var.:	Count:
18.284	3.647	.172	13.301	19.946	450
Minimum:	Maximum:	Range:	Sum:	Sum Squared:	* Missing:
6	29.5	23.5	8228	156416.5	3

Table 4: Frequency Distribution for GPA

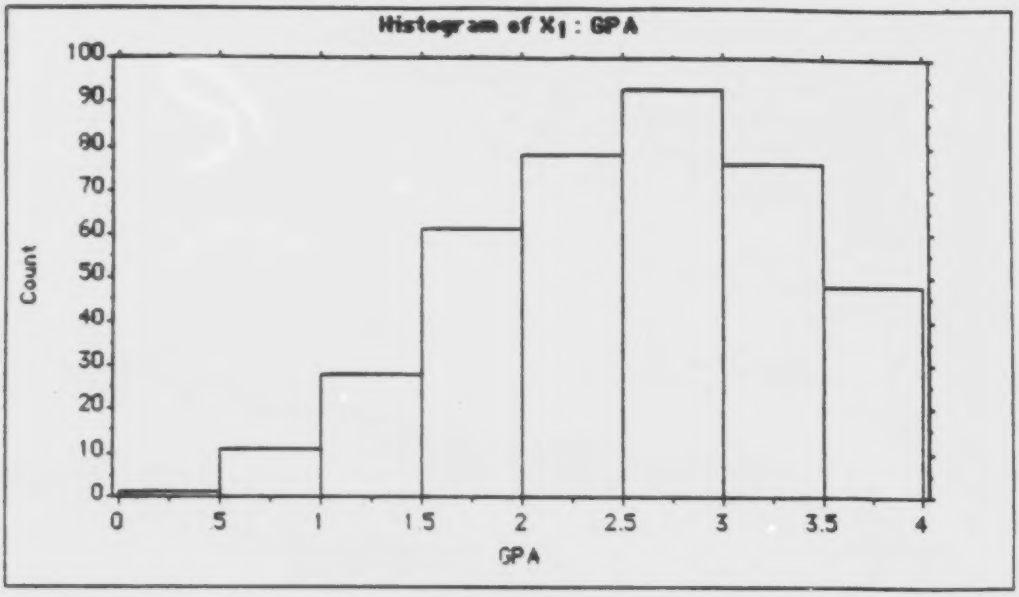


Table 5: Frequency Distribution for Standardized Test

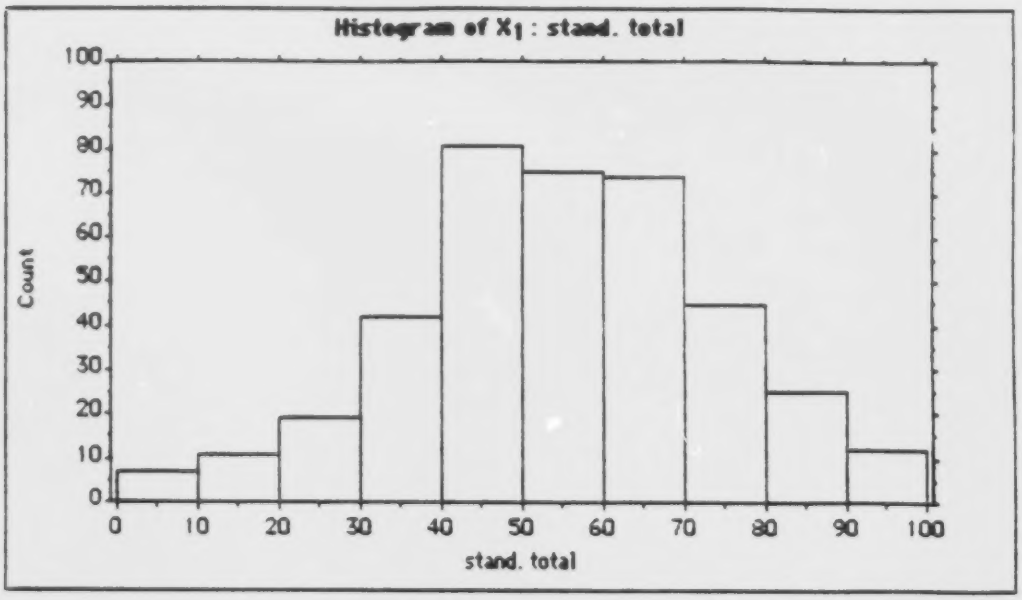
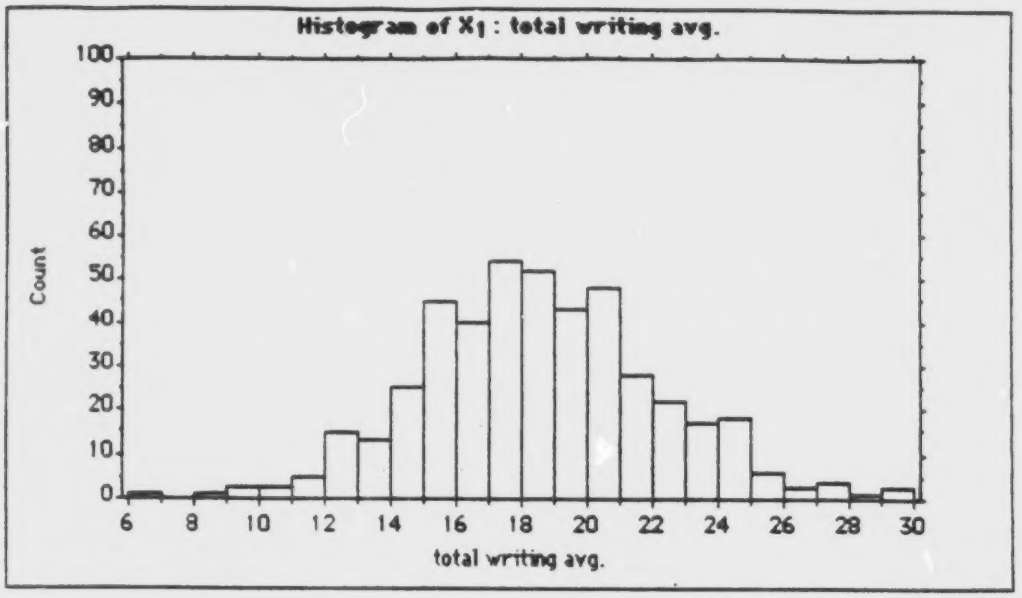


Table 6: Frequency Distribution for Total Writing Average



Tables 7 - 9 show the correlation of GPA, the standardized test, and the total writing average with each other. Table 7 shows a correlation of .565 between the standardized test and GPA. This was the highest correlation found which indicates that there is a relatively strong relationship between students' general performance in school (captured by GPA) and performance on the language arts portion of a standardized test. This relationship generally is well documented in the research literature. Table 8 shows the next highest correlation, .519, between standardized test results and total writing average. Table 9, GPA and total writing average, shows the lowest correlation. The overall results indicate that there is a relationship between these three measures but that the relationship is not perfect. The indicators are apparently measuring similar, but different parts of student performance.

Table 7: Correlation of Standardized Test and GPA

Corr. Coeff. X_1 : stand. total Y_1 : GPA

Count	Covariance	Correlation	R-squared
379	8.673	.565	.32

Note 74 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 8: Correlation of Standardized Test & Total Writing Average

Corr. Coeff. X_1 : stand. total Y_1 : total writing avg.

Count	Covariance	Correlation	R-squared
388	36.961	.519	.269

Note 65 cases deleted with missing values.

Table 9: Correlation of GPA and Total Writing Average

Corr. Coeff. X_1 : GPA Y_1 : total writing avg.

Count	Covariance	Correlation	R-squared
403	1.01	.346	.12

Note 50 cases deleted with missing values.

To further analyze the relationship between the two measures of students' writing performance, results were grouped into logical categories. Standardized test results were grouped into 4 categories:

1) Low - 1st to 25th percentile
2) Med/Low - 26th to 50th percentile
3) Medium - 51st to 75th percentile
4) High - 76th to 99th percentile

Writing performance results for the total writing average (the sum of the averaged score for the six traits), was also grouped into 5 categories:

1) Low - 6 to 11.9
2) Med/Low - 12 to 16.4
3) Medium - 16.5 to 19.5
4) Med/High - 19.6 to 26.9
5) High - 27 to 30

Contingency table 10 shows the results of this analysis. While there is a statistically significant relationship between the two measures of writing performance, the relationship is less than perfect. Two examples illustrate this lack of precision. First, of the 60 students scoring in the bottom quartile, 21 (35%) performed relatively well on the writing task. Second, of the 126 students scoring in the top quartile, 47 (37%) scored average or below on the writing task. The positive association between

Contingency Table 10: Total Writing Avg. and Standardized Test

Coded Chi-Square X_1 : Recode of total writing avg. Y_1 : Categor/Stand.

Summary Statistics

DF	12	
Total Chi-Square	104.425	p=1.0000E-4
G Statistic	•	
Contingency Coefficient:	.461	
Cramer's V	.3	

1

Observed Frequency Table

	low	med/low	medium	med/high	high	Totals:
quartile 1	5	34	18	3	0	60
quartile 2	5	31	43	21	0	100
quartile 3	0	24	41	35	2	102
quartile 4	0	13	34	73	6	126
Totals:	10	102	136	132	8	388

2

these two measures can be seen by the fact that no student scoring below the 50th percentile scored high on the writing task and no student scoring low on the writing task scored above the 50th percentile on a standardized test of language arts. In sum, these data indicate that the combination of the two measures yields more information than either yields alone.

This finding is further confirmed when the relationship between and among the six individual writing traits and the standardized test results are evaluated. Table 11 shows the correlation between all the variables. The information in the table indicates the following:

1. The relationships among the six writing traits are higher than the relationship with the standardized test results.

2. The strongest associations between writing traits and test scores occur with Sentence Structure and Conventions.

3. The weakest association between writing traits and test scores occurs with Ideas and Content and Voice.

Table 11: Correlation Matrix

Correlation Matrix for Variables: X_1 ... X_9

	ideas avg.	organ. a...	voice avg.	word ch...	sent. str...	convent...	total wr...	stand. to...	GPA
ideas avg.	1								
organ. avg.	.752	1							
voice avg.	.732	.656	1						
word cho...	.641	.596	.669	1					
sent. str...	.563	.639	.503	.613	1				
convent. ...	.465	.602	.421	.54	.749	1			
total wri...	.845	.866	.804	.809	.827	.774	1		
stand. total	.342	.441	.356	.418	.516	.462	.515	1	
GPA	.274	.288	.231	.269	.322	.321	.347	.568	1

Note .77 cases deleted with missing values.

Appendix VII includes summary statistics and contingency tables for each individual trait and the standardized test results. For each trait, there is a significant statistical relationship with the standardized results. Again, however, this relationship is not perfect. There are repeated instances when low performance on a specific trait is not associated with low performance on a standardized test. For example, of the 126 students scoring in the top quartile, 55 performed average or below in Writing Conventions. The same holds true for the other traits as well: 48 students performed average or below in Sentence Structure, 59 in Word Choice, 37 in Voice, 58 in Organization, and 49 in Ideas and Content. Conversely, of the 60 students who scored in the bottom quartile, 28 performed average or above in Ideas and Content, 18 in Organization, 33 in Voice, 29 in Word Choice, 22 in Sentence Structure, and 13 in Writing Conventions.

When the total direct writing assessment score is broken down into six component parts, more varied information results. This indicates that while the traits are strongly interrelated, they are in fact measuring different components of writing. These components in turn relate to standardized measures of language arts, but in slightly different ways. In sum, there is something more to be learned by looking at each trait individually.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Alaska's 1989 Interdistrict Direct Writing Assessment

Chapter 5: Strengths and Weaknesses in Student Writing
A Trait by Trait Analysis

This chapter analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of tenth graders' writing abilities for each of the six writing traits. All participating districts are represented here for a total of 668 students. A frequency distribution of students' performance on each of the individual writing traits depicts the range of abilities among the thirteen participating districts. (See Appendix VIII for further statistics of interest.) Trait descriptions, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each trait, are included to further understanding of both the trait and the assessment process. The text for those sections are taken directly from the 1987 Oregon Report. Student papers are also reproduced to characterize the high, medium, and low scoring levels for each trait and to provide examples of the strengths and weaknesses that raters encountered.

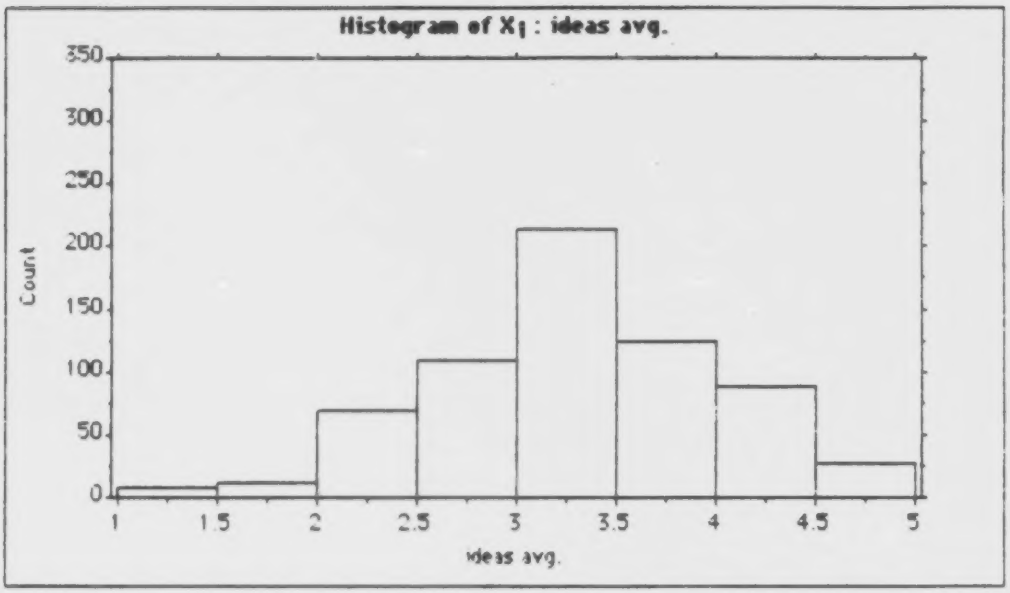
A wide range of ability with respect to each trait is apparent. Although many students revealed weaknesses that are of concern, many other students demonstrated outstanding skill and ability. Interpretation of these results, therefore, must focus not only on what is wrong and where writing instruction may need improvement, but also on what is working well.

Each student's performance provides only a brief glimpse of his or her capability as a writer. Many factors, such as attitude, fatigue, test anxiety, understanding of the prompt and/or instructions, previous experience, etc., may influence a student's performance. What an individual student did on this writing task may differ considerably from what he or she does from day to day. Teachers must use their professional judgment to determine whether a student's scores truly represent that student's abilities. However, with such a large sample of students, the factors affecting performance tend to balance out so that the averages of these tenth grade students provide a fairly accurate profile of actual writing skills for this interdistrict writing assessment.

The topic of friendship is tremendously personal and students wrote a wide variety of responses to the prompt. Some students were more willing to share their feelings about their friends and some were better able to express their emotions. Some of the students' papers showed tremendous maturity and depth in their understanding of friendship while others failed to move beyond a superficial accounting of the things friends are good for. Much of the writing related to the role friends had played during a crisis or significant turning point in their lives. Other writing focused on the spirit of friendship during lighter moments of the students' lives. A number of papers read like greeting cards or grocery lists, failing to move beyond a plain accounting of the meaning of

friendship. The students who were willing to share their innermost feelings and reveal deeper experiences with friendship tended to write more interesting papers and receive higher scores for Ideas and Content, and Voice. These students skillfully described themselves, their friends, and their lives. In the process they revealed themselves and their friends to be the kind of people that anyone would be proud to count as a friend.

Trait 1: Ideas and Content
Score Distribution: Ideas/Content



STRENGTHS

With respect to Ideas and Content, raters look for a paper that's very focused, with a readily identifiable theme. The theme might take the form of a purpose, major outcome or point of view: what the writer thinks or feels about life. Successful papers create a strong impression and tend to show insight based on true personal experience. In addition, stronger papers tend to hold the reader's attention, and to reflect some liveliness and spontaneity.

Specifically, the stronger papers tend to be:

1. Clear so that even a reader who did not know the assigned writing assessment topic would have no trouble figuring out what the writer was trying to say.

2. Interesting and fun to read.

3. Thoughtful, showing that the writer has spent some time considering the content of the paper and its implications.

4. Original-not necessarily unique with respect to the ideas or experiences related, but fresh in approach, showing the student writer's own way of looking at the world.

5. Well developed, with carefully selected examples, details or anecdotes that help bring the central idea into focus.

6. Valid, with a "ring of truth" coming from either the student's own experience or insight about life and human relationships.

7. Controlled and well handled, so that the reader does not need to mentally "create" the paper by filling in gaps, making inferences, or inventing details.

WEAKNESSES

By contrast, the weaker papers tend to be:

1. Unfocused or unclear, often having no identifiable central theme, or else not hitting upon the main idea until the last line.

2. Disjointed or confused-often a laundry list of ideas rather than one central idea well developed.

3. Empty-lacking in content; often just an expanded cliche or a rehash of ideas heard elsewhere.

4. Repetitive-restating the prompt (topic) itself or presenting the writer's first-paragraph ideas in several different ways.

5. Superficial-lacking in insight.

6. Underdeveloped-one or more generalizations not backed by relevant, helpful examples or details.

7. Inadequate, showing limited knowledge of the subject.

Trait Description

SCORE POINT 5

This paper is clear in purpose and conveys ideas in an interesting, original manner that holds the reader's attention. Often, the writing develops as a process of discovery for both reader and writer. Clear, relevant examples, anecdotes or details develop and enrich the central idea or ideas.

* The writer seems to be writing what he or she knows, often from experience.

* The writer shows insight--a good sense of the world, people, situations.

* The writing is often enlivened by spontaneity or a fresh, individual perspective.

* The writer selects supportive, relevant details that keep the main idea(s) in focus.

* Primary and secondary ideas are developed in proportion to their significance; the writing has a sense of balance.

* The writer seems in control of the topic and its development throughout.

SCORE POINT 5 SAMPLE PAPERS

The following papers scored high in the Ideas and Content trait. They exemplify the student writers who eloquently described their experiences with friendship. (All papers in this report appear as students wrote them.)

I watch out my window at the snow falling on the silent street. Each flake passing by my apartment and slowly drifting to the ground. I start to think of the days when I used to run and catch the flakes on my tongue before they could reach the ground below. Before I went out, my mother would make me wear my scarf and gloves. I didn't mind though, I knew how cold it was. I'd run out to the playground across the street and scurry and dance in the snowfall. There were certain times, when I dashed out to make a snowman or have a snowball fight, and I'd find myself alone. My brother, Ryan, was my only companion. There were no other kids I could consider friends.

I met one girl on a early spring day. I was seven at the time, and insisted on following my brother. Little did I know that we were going to come upon another boy that my brother never would get along with. the other boy was broad-faced with kinky aburn hair. His eyes were a magical shade of green. His name, I found out later, was Calvin. With this strange boy, was a short, skinny, blond girl. She smiled at me. Later on in my life, I would think of this moment many times. It was so amazing that both of us were tracking along behind our brothers just looking for a real companion. Ryan told me to go away now, but I refused, saying he couldn't boss me around. Calvin laughed at our squabbling. Ryan started to glare, and arguing began.

I remember being torn between my loyalty to my brother and my deep longing for a friend. Soon, the decision was made for me. The girl walked around our bickering brothers and meekly said hello. I smiled at her and soon we were playing, forgeting our syblings. I never felt lonely again. My brother never fought again. He ended up with a fat lip and a bloody nose. Niether of us would ever forget that day.

Laura, my new friend, became my life long best friend. We played sports together, and laughed together. I learned to take life less seriously Through her friendship. Even in highschool, she could make me smile in the hardest of times. She maybe took life a little too lightly. Sometimes I would tell her to take her head out of the clouds. She never got mad at me, that's just the way our friendship worked.

After graduation, and a long summer working at our separate jobs, we knew it was time to go our own ways. I would go to college, she would travel the world. I knew that she would make it. I guess she knew would too. It's been years since I've seen her, but I remember our goodbye like it was this morning.

I stood at the airport in a t-shirt and shorts, ready for college life and all it would bring. Laura promised she would write from Paris, Rome, Istanbul, and Egypt. I laughed, and was sure she would. We hugged, and my eyes filled with tears. I could see her eyes were on the brink of overflowing. It was the only time I remember seeing her cry.

"Laura, you taught me to laugh"
The green in her eyes were soft, she replied
"You taught me love."

Sometimes we are fooled by the masks of "friends". It takes a lot to tear away the shields and find what lies inside.

The sun burned my face as I looked out from my seventh hour window. Daryl was screeching into the over crowded parking lot just as the bell rang. I was the first out the door, tossing the last hour's books in my locker.

A crowd of kids were surrounding the truck by the time I crammed my way through the school doors. I paused for a moment, slipping on my shades and flinging my leather jacket over my shoulder.

It was another typical Friday. Daryl would pick me up along with some other friends and we'd go cruising for a while. I hopped into the cab of the truck and the others jumped in the back. I could see this was going to be the same old scene. We'd soon find a buyer to get us a case or two of beer, ride out to the campsite and get drunk. It never changed. Daryl and his buddies were no fun to be around when they're drunk.

I decided earlier that day to ask if we could do something fun with out getting drunk. As soon as I asked Daryl I knew it was a mistake by the expression on his face. He looked at me like I was completely brain dead and asked me if I was okay. The sarcasm in his voice cut into me, forcing tears to line my eyes. At least he couldn't see me behind my sunglasses. I shrugged it off thinking that it didn't really matter and cranked the stereo a little louder.

We pulled into the parking lot at the Pizza House and everyone piled out of the truck. I didn't because I didn't really have an appetite. I'd rather sit out in the truck, smoking a cigarette, and sulk. It didn't seem to phase the other guys that I wasn't with them. Sometimes I wondered if they even knew I existed.

The sun was still bright in the sky and sweat was forming on my forehead. It was a beautiful day and I had nothing better to do, so I crawled up onto the hood and enjoyed some rays. I was almost in dream land when a voice rang out of nowhere. It was a girl from my home room, Brittany. We talked for a while and she asked what my plans for the weekend were. I told her my situation with no enthusiasm. We talked on some more and I handed her a pop from the ice chest in the back. Then she asked if I wanted to go to the roller rink instead, with her and a bunch of friends. I kind of hesitated because I wanted Daryl to come along and I knew he wouldn't. I figured it was worth a try so I went in to ask him. He looked up at me with no emotion on his face and told me he didn't care what I did. I felt my body go cold and an empty feeling took over. How could I have ever thought of him as my friend?

I was tired of being hurt and unnoticed by people that I thought cared about me. Maybe they were just something to hang onto until a real friend came along. I thought about it as I walked away from Daryl. Through those black doors that stood in front of me was someone who cared how I felt. All I had to do was walk through them and I would find the start of a real friendship.

Sometimes we get confused on what a real friend is. It takes a great deal of pain before someone can find a person that really cares about them. When that person is found it seems well worth the wait to be able to call them a friend.

SCORE POINT 3

The writer's purpose is reasonably clear; however, the overall result may not be especially captivating. Support is less than adequate to fully develop the main idea(s).

* The reader may not be convinced of the writer's knowledge of the topic.
* The writer seems to have considered ideas, but not thought things through all the way.
* Ideas, though reasonably clear and comprehensible, may tend toward the mundane; the reader is not sorry to see the paper end.
* Supporting details tend to be skimpy, general, predictable, or repetitive. Some details seem included by chance, not selected through careful discrimination.
* Writing sometimes lacks balance: e.g., too much attention to minor details, insufficient development of main ideas, informational gaps.
* The writer's control of the topic seems inconsistent or uncertain.

SCORE POINT 3 SAMPLE PAPERS

These papers are good examples of papers scored at the mid-range of this trait. Although the sincerity of the writers comes through, you don't feel as if you really know their friends.

Friends are important to have. Sometimes when you think you don't need them, is the time when you really do.

Friendship has always counted to me, but the times when I really felt I didn't have a friend in the world, someone would come talk to me and cheer me up, just because that someone was there. Doesn't matter if that person was a friend or not, because if that person would take the time to talk to you when you needed a friend, they would now be your friend.

Everybody has their bad days, sometimes worst than others, but when I do, I get frustrated with everyone and everything, my close friends relize that its just a bad day, so they try and help me get through, by not taking my complaining too seriously. They tell me to take it easy and mellow out. They do what they can to help me, I do the same for them when they are having a bad day. I try to be as much help as I can when a friend needs someone to talk to or needs advice, they do the same for me, but I get stubborn and don't always talk about my problems, or don't always listen to advice given to me. I'm suprised I have so many friends, because alot of the times I'm hard to get along with, well actually I'm hard to get to know, not because I'm rude or anything, just because I'm a quiet person and shy around people I don't know too well. I guess all my friends understand that, friendship has really always counted for me, especially for the people I like and trust.

Friendship is the basic essence of life. I need friends, you need friends, everyone needs friends. Without friends life would be one dull, black and white picture.

Friendship is strongest during your youth, your school days. After that, you go on and work and get married. Sure you'll have friends, but not as great as the ones in your prime.

Friends have a mutual trust in their relationship. They can share their deepest, most inner thoughts as well as their feelings with one another.

The time of my life when friendship really counted was when school started up to this day. In school you meet all these dissimilar people. Everyone is unique in a way from another. Some, however, have much in common with one another.

My family tends to move a lot due to certain reasons. I've lived in four different states during my school years, so I can define the word transfer. I also understand what it is like to leave a good friend and never see them agian. It's the worst feeling in the world.

I lived in Massachusettes for a few years. I was young and unpredictable then, and had a lot of good friends. Of course being younger, they were all guys.

We all lived near each other. We played baseball almost every day, and we had a great time. Sometimes fights broke out in the game but in the end we were still friends. Naturally, baseball came to be our favorite sport, and we still play it today.

We also used to go on those hunts in the woods. We'd have wars or find what we thought was treasure. We'd also sometimes find snakes, that scared the hell out of us.

I later moved to Alaska. I've lived here four years and counting. Now as I get older friendship seems more sophisticated. Now I'm friends with girls too, not just guys. As any other guy would say, I like the girls better. We play a lot of sports together, and we go out cruising in cars together. We have a lot of good times.

As I look back at this and look at what is going on in front of me, I realize I'll never have friends like this again. Does anyone?

SCORE POINT 1

This paper lacks a central idea or purpose - or the central idea can be inferred by the reader only because he or she knows the topic (question asked).

* Information is very limited (e.g., restatement of the prompt, heavy reliance on repetition) or simply unclear altogether.
* Insight is limited or lacking (e.g., details that do not ring true; dependence on platitudes or stereotypes).
* Paper lacks balance; development of ideas is minimal, or there may be a list of random thoughts from which no central theme emerges.
* Writing tends to read like a rote response - merely an effort to get something down on paper.

* The writer does not seem in control of the topic; shorter papers tend to go nowhere, longer papers to wander aimlessly.

SCORE POINT 1 SAMPLE PAPERS

These papers were scored weaker in the Ideas and Content trait. The first is typical of the grocery list response.

Friends are people We can depend on. Friends can be very special people to you or just ordinary friends.

Friends help you when you have a problem, or if your depressed.

Friends can help you in the most difficult problems that you have.

I have a friend I can really depend on. he's the bestfriend I ever had.

He doesn't let me down or shuts me out.

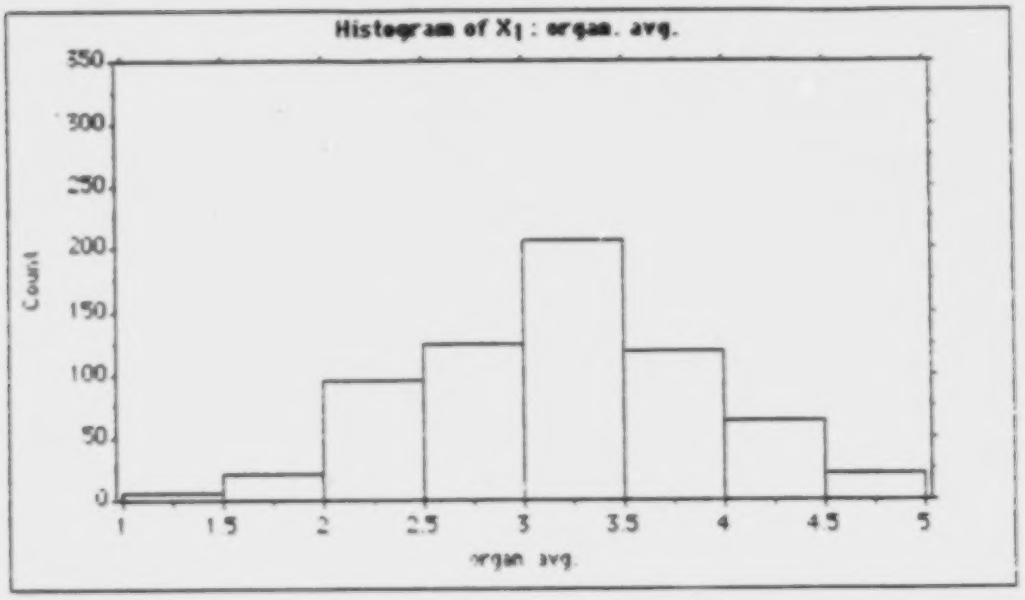
He listens to whatever I have to say. If he has a problem then i'll be there for him and help him in anyway I can.

That's why we all need friends, friends are the best thing that can ever happen to you.

If somebody else comes around and asks me if I can talk to them about a problem they have then I will, I guess that's the kind of friend I like to be!

The friends I have now are not after my my drugs, ore my money. Becuse I don't do drugs, and I'm a repected person for who I am. My friends like me for who I am and want me to stay this way. My friends help me out when I'm down, just as I do for them. My friends suport me in what I do with my life. They want me to live instead of survive, and this they help me with.

Trait 2: Organization
Score Distribution: Organization



STRENGTHS

With respect to Organization, the raters look for a paper with a definite sense of pacing; it may or may not have a conventional pattern (e.g., the traditional five-paragraph essay), but the progression of events does move the reader through the paper in some logical manner without getting bogged down in repetition or extraneous information. The organization may be based on a recurring theme, an evolving idea or impression, a careful building to a climax, a gradual revelation of information or resolution of some question, or a time progression.

Specifically, the stronger papers in Organization tend to

1. Have a strong opening that make the reader want to keep reading.

2. Show logical progression (not necessarily the standard 5-paragraph essay unless that structure fits the student's approach and theme well); the paper started somewhere and led to something-a climax, conclusion, high point, revelation, solution, or whatever.

3. Reflect a sense of order, so that details or events seemed to come at the right time, to fit where placed, and to serve a purpose.

4. Include enough detail so that there did not seem to be large informational gaps.

5. Get to the heart of things without dwelling on trivia.

6. Make good use of transitions so that the reader could always see how the writer got from one point to another.

7. Conclude effectively by leaving the reader something to think about-not simply announcing the end.

8. Stop when the writer has nothing more to say.

WEAKNESSES

By contrast, the weaker papers in Organization tend to:

1. Begin in the middle of things, or else open with a belabored introduction.

2. Insert too much detail before getting to the point.

3. Include too much "interruptive information"-extraneous, irrelevant details that bog down or obscure the main ideas.

4. Start an idea but never complete it or flesh it out.

5. Show excessive repetition, with one idea repeated two, three or even more times.

6. Lack direction-simply drift aimlessly with little or no sense of progress or direction.

7. Conclude weakly or abruptly, often stooping at random or just repeating the introduction in slightly different words.

8. Continue just for the sake of filling space even when the writer really has nothing more to say.

Trait Description

SCORE POINT 5

The writer organizes material in a way that enhances the reader's understanding, or that helps to develop a central idea or theme. The order may be conventional or not, but the sequence is effective and moves the reader through the paper.

* Details seem to fit where they're placed, and the reader is not left with the sense that "something is missing".

* The writer provides a clear sense of beginning and ending, with an inviting introduction and a satisfying conclusion ("satisfying" in the sense that the reader feels the paper has ended at the right spot).

* Transitions work well; the writing shows unity and cohesion, both within paragraphs and as a whole.

* Organization flows so smoothly that the reader doesn't have to think about it.

SCORE POINT 5 SAMPLE PAPERS

The following papers exemplify writers with strong organization. Their organizational skills actually enhance one's enjoyment of the stories.

Last year my older brother Jordin died. I guess in some ways it was my fault, although I didn't mean to do it. Sometimes it just seems like I have no luck at all! Anyway, this is my story.

It was a windy October morning when Jordin and I decided to go hunting. We were walking on a trail through the forest. The sun was just showing through the clouds. I was carring the gun and Jordin was walking ahead of me. All of the sudden, I tripped on an old root of a tree that was showing above ground. As I was falling my hand gripped the gun harder and off went the trigger. All I could hear was my brothers scream as the bullet tore at his flesh.

He died in the hospital shortly after. Sence that day our family has never been the same. All I have left of him that my parents didn't store away, was his 10th grade picture, but my parents wanted that off the wall too.

My parents had a hard time dealing with it. My mom doesn't have much to say to me. I think she still sort of blames me for his death. My father has become a lot more quiet. Don't my parents realize how much I was hurting to? Not only did I miss Jordin but I also felt very guilty about it.

About a month after Jordin had died, my family moved to a different city called Seattle. I missed our small farm house in Auburn with all its space to walk around.

After going to school for a few weeks I met a boy named Christopher. Chris is a tall skinny boy who likes to play basketball. He's really easy going and always has a smile on his face. We do everything together. He helps me to deal with everything. Not once has he pryed anything out of me, it just comes naturally to me to talk to him.

We just got done building a tree fort in his back yard. I spend a good deal of my time up there. Sometimes I go up there alone and just remember Jordin. I took my picture of him out of my drawer. It has it's own special place on the wall. Sometimes I talk to the picture of Jordin. Tell him everything thats happened. And I remember all the fun things we used to do.

My parents are slowly getting back on their feet. My mom's off her tranquilizers. Sometimes we talk about Jordin, but not very often. My father is starting to talk more too. He tells us about his day at the office, when we're sitting at the dinner table.

Slowly my family is coming back together. Chris comes over to my house a lot. With his easy going attitude he breaks the ice that's sometimes floating around our house. His frendship has been everything to me these last few months. I don't know how I could have gotten over this without Chris's support! I guess that's what friends are for!
I woke up to the smell of Breakfast cooking. It was a Saturday morning so I knew my mom was the one cooking. It was a beautiful day out, Sunny and Not a cloud in the sky. I decided to take a quick shower and give Jason a call. I hadn't talked to him in over a month. I called around 11 and his mom answered, when I asked if he was there She said, "No, He was in the hospital". Apparently he'd Been in a car accident the Night before and Been knocked unconcious.

Sunday I drove to the Hospital to see how he was doing. The sky had grown dark and it was beginning to rain. I Met his mom in the waiting room where the doctors sent us because we couldn't see him yet. I've Been to the hospital four times this week and still haven't seen him yet. Finally, on Friday his mom called and said he could have one visitor, it had been raining all week and the roads were slick so I had my mom drive me there.

I didn't know what to bring so I brought some magazines and a portable television set. We met his mom at the door she didn't look to good, but then She'd been here all week. I stood at the door to his room for a good ten minutes, trying to build my courage. Finally I pushed open the door and stepped in, he didn't look any different from when I saw him sleeping, aside from the bruise on his forehead he looked like he was sleeping peacefully.

The Doctor said it was a good idea to talk to him as I normally would, it felt akward at first, But I got used to it. I've Been here talking to him for two weeks now and theres still no change. The rain hasn't stopped either.

Today, I tried something different I arrived earlier and brought his cat. I told Jason what I'd brought him and layed it on his chest. I could have sworn I seen him smile, so I ran to get his mom, and when we arrived in the room, he was sitting up playing with his cat. He asked me to open the curtains, as I pulled them open the sun shone in and there wasn't a cloud in the sky.

SCORE POINT 3

The writer attempts to organize ideas and details cohesively, but the resulting pattern may be somewhat unclear, ineffective, or awkward. Although the reader can generally follow what's being said, the organizational structure may seem at times to be forced, obvious, incomplete or ineffective.

* The writer seems to have a sense of beginning and ending, but the introduction and/or conclusion tend to be less effective than desired.
* The order may not be a graceful fit with the topic (e.g., a forced conventional pattern, or lack of structure).
* The writer may miss some opportunities for transitions, requiring the reader to make assumptions or inferences.
* Placement or relevance of some details may be questionable (e.g., interruptive information; writer gets to the point in roundabout fashion).
* While some portions of the paper may seem unified (e.g., organization within a given paragraph may be acceptable), cohesion of the whole may be weak.

SCORE POINT 3 SAMPLE PAPERS

These papers received mid-range scores on the trait. The first paper is a good example of balanced strengths and weaknesses for Organization. It starts out very well but gets confusing later.

Friendship really counted when my uncle died. Uncle Carl was my whole life. I was going to commit suicide. I went down to my boat, stood by the motor, and was ready to jump in the water. Just then I had a flash back of Carl when he was alive. I don't know if I wanted to have that flashback or if it was faith. Because right in the middle of the flashback, my cousin was walking along the bank. He asked what I was doing. I didn't want to tell him what I was really doing. So I told him "I was just getting some fresh air." He knew I was lyeing. He asked "What's really wrong man, Is it about carl?"
"Yeah."
"Talk to me, man. I need someon to talk to. too."
"I was going to commit suicide."

He was shocked. We talk in my boat. Time went by with a blink of an eye. It morning when we finished. When I mentioned "..Carl was my whole life.." he was my idol. I was going to be just like him. He wasn't just my uncle or an older person to respect. He was also my friend. He told me stories a bout his training, sister, little events in school, and mostly of his father. There is one thing that I would not do that he did, drink. If he was alive now I know he'd be proud of me.

Carl was the youngest and only boy in his family. A friend was there when my cousin Matt died. Matt drown in a small lake called Horse Shoe Lake. It's near my home village. When I heard this, all I could thick of was Matt's motionless body at the bottem of the lake no sign of life. My cousin Gug. the one I talked to when carl died, came to my house asked if I knew of this tradgedy. I hesiteted before I ansewred because I knew he was going to cry. I nodded my head. As soon as I did he cried, cried for the first in his life he cried for someones death. We didn't talk about Matt until a week later. My friend was always there when it really counts.

I had always wanted someone to talk to, being either male or female, as long as it wasn't a family member. People from outside can see the problem quicker and can usually give you better advice. Well I finally get that type of friend, her name is Sue. She was and still is one of my dearest friends. But the problem was that I never had a problem that I needed to talk to her about. Three years later I met another friend. Although Alisa is and was my best friend during the time I needed her, Sue was easier to talk to. Alisas family is christian and go to church, they are pretty religious. Sue's family may be christians but they are much more like my family that Alisas.

Let me tell you about when their friendship really counted.

My parents had been planning on getting a divorce for quite some years, But when I was fourteen the told us kids, my brothers and sisters that they had decided to do so. I was always the type of person that new, or though I new, that my parents were to perfect to get a divorce. After their 22nd anniversary I had literally crossed the possibility out. So

when they told us, I felt as if I was in a dream land. I expected to open my eyes and be lying in my bed. But that never happened. I cried all day, did not sleep at all, So it was pretty obvious when I went to school that something was wrong. Alisa new automatically that I was upset about something. when I told her she couldn't believe it. After I had told her everything I felt a heavy weight life off of me, but there was still something there. Something growing. Something I couldn't explain to her. Sure shes smart but I new that being from a family where nothing like that happened, she wouldn't and couldn't understand as well as I needed someone to.

For months, nowing that whatever I needed to get out, couldn't, I made myself depressed. and extremely stressed out. Just reading booklets on depression and stress would make me cry. I new, even though I wouldn't face it, that I had a problem and wouldn't be able to help it or myself until I told someone. Someone I could talk to and cry until everything was out. So I talked to Sue, her parents have been divorced and she hasn't seen her dad in years. So deep down she had the same problem as me. I talked to her and cried to her and she understood, maybe not all but what she didn't, Alisa did. Before I talked to her I would sit for hours in my room and talk outloud & cry. To some that may sound as if it should make me feel better, but It did not, It just made me worse. So being able to talk to Sue and Alisa I started to feel great. I had things to look forward to everyday. I got along better with my family and everyone else. I stopped blaming everyone for my own problems.

Talking to Sue and Alisa helped me through something that could have easily ruined my life mentally and emotionally.

SCORE POINT 1

Organization is haphazard and disjointed. The writing shows little or no sense of progression or direction. Examples, details, or events seem unrelated to any central idea, or may be strung together helter-skelter with no apparent pattern.

- There is no clear sense of beginning or ending.
- Transitions are very weak or absent altogether.
- Arrangement of details is confusing or illogical.
- There are noticeable information "gaps"; the reader is left dangling, or cannot readily see how the writer got from one point to another.
- The paper lacks unity and solidarity.

SCORE POINT 1 SAMPLE PAPERS

These papers are representative of lower scores on the Organization trait. The writing, in terms of organization, is frequently jumbled and confused so that you must work to make sense of it.

This is a story about me.

I don't really have a best freind.

But, I'll just say I have alot of best freinds. They really mean alot to me, only when I'm happy.

Whenever I make a joke,, my freinds would laugh at it. That's what make me have more freinds, but sometimes I'd just introduce my self.

What I really feel inside, is not really shown outside of me.

I'm me, inside of me, but I'm a stranger on the outside.

I'm just a natural person, that's what I think about myself. Cause I'm happy to be that way. All I want is to make freinds and to have fun, with them.

Sometimes it is dificult for me to have freinds because they would be jealous of me or ? And I would not stand it. I would stay or talk to that person or just say to her. What the matter or try to solve it. I'm not so good in solving problems, like that or I would just ignore them.
All I want is to have alot of freinds as possible and to have fun. A day when a freind really meant so much to me. I met a girl her name is Natellie, but she is from another place.

I met her 4 days ago.

First I thought she would be very stuckup. But once I got to know her. She was O.K. She was fun to be around with. She had this instict. Like I could really make that girl happy. I could really make her laugh. Cause me. I was bored all the time. I wasn't the person who <u>always</u> wanted fun, but when I met her she was like Oh! <u>wow</u> she almost like me! She wants to meet people, have fun. When I met her, she brightened my life entirely! We had so much fun together!

Oh! it was so sad when she had to leave to her home town.
I gave her my address the day before.

And I'm sure she'll write to me. So that includes my story;

A day when a Freind meant so much to me.

Friends are, perhaps, the most important things in life. Without friends one wouldn't be able to get through some of the hard times.

Such a time is one that I am relating to you.

It was hot in August. That day I remember in particular because of the cool breeze that was so rare in that time of the year.

The fair had come through town with its rodeos, rides, wild animals, & clowns. Many people had come out to see the Fair off. All of the little children were still excited from the previous night.

Strangely, however, all didn't seem right. Some of the Fair people were acting suspicious. Few people noticed because of all the good humor the town was in these days.

Then suddenly all the cars and various trucks lurched into action and started off down the road out of town.

It was about two days later when Dave (my best friend) and I decided to go hunting and see what we could find. With our rifles and enough ammunition for the day as well as a sack lunch each, we headed out. We figured on going up the mountain and back a small ravine to the lake and see if we could catch a deer drinking the cool water as they often did when it was so hot.

Something was different right off as soon as we got into the woods. There were usually birds calling greetings here & there. This time there was almost none. For almost the whole two mile hike it was eerily quiet. We figured once we got into the ravine things would liven up.

There it was even more silent. This sudden change in the usual atmosphere had us both paranoid now. On the edge of the ravine we came out overlooking the lake. We were tired and it was hot so we decided to eat.

Rustling in the bushes quickly brought us out of our laughter and clamoring about. Before we could get to our rifles a mountain lion stepped out of the underbrush. We froze, neither of us dared move. Suddenly the cat sprang, it landed on me and it and I both flew over the cliff. For what seemed like an eternity we fell.

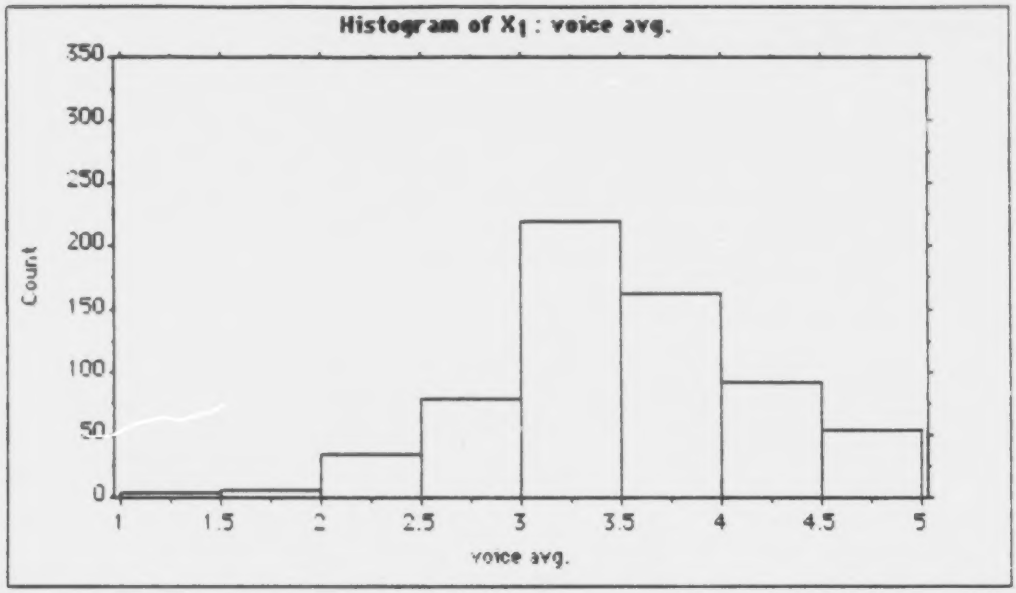
I wake up to Dave calling my name. I sat up and let my vision adjust. I was on a ledge thirty feet down. The cat guessed kept falling. Dave told me not to move and that he was going to get a rope. Feeling the ache throughout my body I layed back to wait.

I don't know how long I slept but when I woke up it was dark. I felt a wave come over me. I was frightened and couldn't think rationally. I started to panic and climb up the cliff but It was in vain. I was trying to calm myself as I heard a rustling noise from somewhere. Had the mountain lion returned?

Dave popped his head over the side of the cliff and lowered a rope down. I tied it about myself and started to climb while he pulled. In no time at all I was safe. All that was left now was the hike back to town.

As this incident illustrates it is a very good thing to have good friends who are there in times of need.

Trait 3: Voice
Score Distribution: Voice



STRENGTHS

Voice is the mark of individuality. With respect to this trait, raters look for a paper that stands out from the others, that has a distinctive sound all its own. A writer who projects a strong voice seems to enjoy the act of writing and to get caught up in it. The sense of writer-reader interaction (personal, very direct communication) is strong. In weaker papers, the writer seems simply to be writing to get something down on paper, or else to please the reader, to say what the writer thinks the reader will probably want to hear.

Specifically, the stronger papers tend to be

1. Personal and individual-a paper with strong voice is unique in style and tone.

2. Communicative, speaking directly to the reader.

3. Sincere and earnest, indicating that the writer cares deeply about getting the point across or telling the story effectively.

4. Honest, digging deep to reveal the writer's true thoughts and feelings about the world.

5. Appealing; often the reader is truly captivated and sorry to have the paper end.

6. Natural-never forced, stilted or inhibited.

7. Moving-capable of evoking a mood or feeling. Papers with very strong voice have the power to evoke a strong personal response (joy, amusement, curiosity, understanding, sympathy, concern, sadness, surprise, delight or whatever) in the reader.

WEAKNESSES

The weaker papers tend to:

1. Rely heavily on generalities, thus producing the "safe" paper meant to offend no one.

2. Remain on the surface, never seeming to divulge the writer's true feelings.

3. Hide behind a mask of expanded cliches, surface details, or a put-on tone (sometimes vulgarity used only for shock value).

4. Be consistently bland or flat.

5. Sound overstated, preposterous, pretentious or even downright false.

6. Be inconsistent, as if the writer couldn't decide whether to produce a formal essay or just chat.

7. Use a tone inappropriate for the topic or audience-sometimes immature for grade level, sometimes insolent or wholly indifferent.

Trait Description

SCORE POINT 5

The paper bears the unmistakable stamp of the individual writer. The writer speaks directly to the reader, and seems sincere, candid and committed to the topic. The overall effect is individualistic, expressive and engaging; this paper stands out from the others.

* The reader feels an interaction with the writer, and through the writing, gains a sense of what the writer is like.

* The paper is honest. There is a real effort to communicate, even when it means taking a risk (e.g., an unexpected approach or revealing of self).

* The writing is natural and compelling.

* Tone is appropriate and consistently controlled.

* The writer's own enthusiasm or interest comes through and brings the topic to life.

SCORE POINT 5 SAMPLE PAPERS

The following papers typify those with strong voices. It is interesting that they were written independently by two girls in an Alaskan community about their friendship for each other.

Acts produced from a truly unselfish friendship often weave a tale that pull at one's heart strings.

Stepping out of character in the name of friendship brings both parties close, and enriches their lives.

This is the story of a shy young woman who "stuck her head
out of her shell" for a friend and discovered she liked the fresh air.

Early summer in Valdez Alaska was found with a fourteen year-old who felt stifled. Being a new arrival in town, I was content to quietly observe the activities of people around me for a short time. My inner feelings quickly surfaced, however-I wanted to become involved. Although normally a friendly and outgoing person, I felt intimidated by the apparent "closedness" of the town; the people were very close knit.

Sensing my frustration, my mother set out to inconspiciously find me a companion-anything obvious would have made me suspicious.

My mother mentioned my fluency in sign-language while conversing with a friend one afternoon and discovered there was a deaf girl in town my age. She called the girl's house and arranged a meeting one afternoon through the girl's mother.

The first moments of conversation were uneasy. My sign-language was rusty, and we were both rather distant - assessing each other's personality. The aloofness was short-lived, however - the need for friendship and the sense of "kindered spirits" prevailed.

Summer was filled with long, lazy days. Many hours of conversation and companionship revealed aspects of Julie's deep, beautiful, and sunny personality that had never been seen before. Her friendliness towards me warmed my heart and took away my loneliness.

One day drifted into another until it was almost impossible to distinguish each individual day. Fall rolled around before we knew what had happened - and it was time to go to school.

The prospect of High School still frightened me immensely, for although I had one best friend to share my days with, there were 199 unfamiliar people to face. Although I was uncertain, I knew if given a start I would make friends quickly.

The first day of school dawned cool but sunny. I walked over to Julie's house and together we made the trip to the high school.

When Julie and I arrived we were meet with many new faces. Julie had known many of them since kindergarten, but had not really talked to them since she became deaf at the age of nine.

I knew Julie was extremely shy, but I longed to be introduced to people and start on the long road to acceptance. Julie sensed my thoughts and appeared to consider the giant "step-out-of-character" quietly. Finally, she took a deep breath, smiled and walked up to a clique of freshmen.

"Hi everyone, how's it going?" she said with convincing nonchalance.

"This is my best friend, Lindi..."

She looked at me and smiled - my feet were set on the road.

True friends are an invaluable asset during one's adolescence.

Friends are extremely valuable in one's adolescent years. It is hard to become socially active without them, and I am living proof of that.

My problem began six years ago, when I lost my hearing literally overnight. I was a naturally quiet young girl, and this incident caused me to become almost completely silent.

There were other children at school who still wished to be my friends even after my deafness was common knowledge, but the communication barrier between us grew to be a wall of isolation completely surrounding me. My "friendships" were smiles and friendly waves in the halls at school. At home, I became a hermit and attempted to create my own silent world of books and homework.

My first turning point was the first day of junior high school. That was when I met my current interpreter, a young woman of 24 named Nita. She became the first true best friend I had in three years. Whenever something happened to me, either in school or at home, I would eagerly hold it in my memory until the next time I saw her and could let it spill out in a jumble of signs or spoken words.

The second turning point come almost two years later. I met my best friend, Lindi, and I can still remember the day in perfect detail.

It was one of Valdez's rare spring days. The weather was warm and sunny, perfect for outdoor activities and better for meeting friends. Our meeting was planned by our mothers, because I sorely needed a friend my own age and Lindi had just moved to town.

Just after noon my father asked me to help him carry some equipment out to the car. I agreed immediately because it was an excuse to get outside. Just as we finished loading the car, a mini-van drove to the end of our street and stopped in front of one of the houses. A woman and her daughter got out of the vehicle and began walking down the street, studying each house they passed.

As they neared my house, my father called out, "Excuse me. Are you the ____'s?"

"Yes, we are," replied the women. She and the girl came over and introduced themselves as Linda and Lindi. Lindi and I looked each other over, then began talking and within five minutes we formed a bond so strong it has never even faltered in the two years we've been together.

During those two years, I have seen myself transform from a silent bookworm to a normal teenager who loves being with friends and who now has a ready smile.

This transformation occured because two young women showed another the true meaning of friendship and drew her out of her shell. It also proves the unequaled value of friends.

Trait Description

SCORE POINT 3

The writer makes an honest effort to deal with the topic, but without a strong sense of personal commitment or involvement. The result is often pleasant or acceptable, yet not striking or compelling in a way that draws the reader in.

* The reader has only an occasional or limited sense of interaction with the writer.
* Writer may seem self-conscious or unwilling to take a risk - may seem to be writing what he/she thinks the reader wants.
* Paper lacks individuality, or the ring of conviction.
* The writing communicates, but only in a routine, predictable fashion that tends to make it blend in with the efforts of others.
* Voice may be inconsistent; it may emerge strongly on occasion, only to shift or even disappear altogether.

SCORE POINT 3 SAMPLE PAPERS

These papers are average in Voice. Neither writer elicits the strong emotional response felt in the two previous examples although they deal with painful issues.

The word friend in the dictionary means "one who is personally well known by oneself and for whom one has warm regard or affection."

Now let me put it in the way I see friends and friendship.

Friends are people who I've known for a long time, and that person is someone who I can absolutely trust, and for that person who can trust me, somebody I can be honest with. Share my secrets, someone who can be there when I need help, A friend is also someone I can tell out my problems to, let my feelings out. A friend I can lean on her shoulder. And of course friends also has to have alot of fun together. I used to have a friend like that, but I lost that friend she also was my best friend in the whole world, but now I have one less friend.

Valerie was the bestest friend ever. We've known each other since we were in 4th grade. We used to attend at Tudor Elementary school. We lived right across from each other.

Every morning, on weekdays, when we go to school, Valerie and I would always walk to school together except when either one of us woke up late or is sick.

Val was the only person I would be with at school. Becuz all the other kids would make fun of me, just becuz I was a eskimo, or a native. Val was a native, she is a inupiat eskimo, and I am an Yupik eskimo.

When Val wasn't in school I would feel all alone, and every time, those dumb white little kids would keep calling my names. I used to be confused, becuz I lived, and I was born in Alaska, and some of them too, and I thought we were all the same. But I was always different, they also made fun of Val also, but when we're are together, we didn't care what they had said about us. We just ignored them, we would have fun, just the two of us. When school was over, we would do homework with each other but we'd be in a different class.

When ever we finish, we'd always go outside with Val's brother and sister's, and mine, we would play lap game (eskimo baseball), kick ball, smear the queer, we would always have fun.

On weekends I would spend the night at Valerie's house, and we would stay all night watching T.V. or playing games. Then the next night Valerie would spend the night with me, and we would do the same thing.

One time when I spended the night at Valerie's one time. We saw the northern lights outside, we grabed some blankets and we would go out on her batio, we would fix the blankets so it would be comfortable to lay on. We would be watching the northern lights bounce around when we whistle.

After the Northern Lights have gone away, we would watch the stars twinkle all night long, sometimes we see a star shooting across the sky and I would wish that me and Valerie would be friends forever.

We were friends until the 18th of March, 1989. Now the closest friend I've ever trusted was my aunt Fran. She has replaced the best friend I had. I can tell her anything. She is someone I can turn to, who I care for me, as well as I care for her. To me, she is the bestest friend in the whole entire world! I don't know what I'd do without my aunt Francine. There is nobody here I can turn to when I talk about my problems, and especially, we always I mean always have the greatest times with each other.

My aunt Fran gives the greatest friendship a person can give. She's understanding, caring, trustworthy, fun, helpful. If my aunt Francine was ever dying, I would give her my heart & soul!

Friends are someone you can count on. Friends should always help eachother out no matter what. They are the people you can turn to in case of a problem. You and your friend have good understanding of eachother. They should never ever try to force you in doing things you don't to do. But if a friend, well if you think they are, ever try to push you in doing things you don't like or think are bad, I guess they aren't your friends. You should be comfortable being with them and be able to tell your problems. This way they can help you out.

I have many friends. We all try to have fun and laugh together. My friends and I have many things in common. We love shopping, love the same music, same sports and most of all, we all love eating. My favorite are anything that has cheese in them. Some of the examples are hamburgers, lasagna, macaroni w/cheese, etc. My friends love Chinese, Mexican, and others. The truth I love almost any kind of food.

My friends and I don't always have such great times because we don't always agree on the same things. I guess this is natural. Everyone don't always agree on everything. They have different opinions.

I remember when my grandpa died. I felt so all alone, thinking now that he was gone. At night I would find myself crying and remembering the happy times I was with my grandpa. This was the time that I needed a friend to talk to, so I won't feel sad always. But even when I'm having fun with my friends, I would never ever forget my grandpa.

A time in my life that I can remember when friendship really counted was when two close friends died. If I wasn't to have as many friends as I do, I probably wouldn't be as emotionally healthy as I am. I guess I really don't realize just how many close friends I have.

Anyway, I remember that day when Mr. _____ came into the classroom & told us that two former Kodiak high school students had just been killed in a car accident on the way back to college early that morning. It was really a shock & my heart turned to a lump in the middle of my throat & it became hard to swallow it. The first thing I thought was that he must be kidding us, but realized: "who would make a sick joke like that?"

The more I thought about it, the more I felt that empty & yet heartwrenching pain right in the pit of my stomach. Not only a pain for myself, but for the ___'s & the ____'s, who have been very close family friends ever since I can remember.

As soon as class ended, everyone walked silently into the halls as if black death had swept through our High school halls. No one knew what to say & you could hear the faint, but yet noticable whispers & sniffling coming from people that knew them well. Then... I started to cry. And one of my closest friends, a friend, who if I were to lose, I wouldn't know what to do, put her caring arm around me & comfortingly held me close to her, which is an action I've felt so many times before, but haven't noticed how much it's worth. She did not know Dave or cliff very well, but through me, she felt the pain I felt & knew what to do.

Throughout the rest of the day, people were solemnly wandering through the halls, giving long, caring hugs & freely crying on one another's shoulders. I too got many of those hugs, some from friends I hardly ever talk to or remember that they are my friends.

I had forgotten how much friends can mean to each other, especially in times such as those. I'm thankful that I do have so many friends & am sorry that I don't spend alot of time realizing how many I have. But in times of need, friendship really does count.

Trait Description

SCORE POINT 1

The writer may not have understood the assignment, or may simply have felt indifferent toward the topic. As a result, no clear voice emerges. The result is flat, lifeless, very mechanical and stilted, or possibly inappropriate.

* The reader has no sense that this writer was "writing to be read," and experiences virtually no writer-reader interaction.

* The writing has virtually no individual personality or character; there is no identifiable voice behind the words.

* There is little or no evidence of the writer's involvement in the topic.

SCORE POINT 1 SAMPLE PAPERS

These papers are weak in Voice. Neither writer communicates much interest in the topic, simply writing to get something down.

Friendship (frend/ship) 1 condition of being friends. 2 liking between friends. 3 friendly feeling or behavior:friendiness. noun

We all need friendship no matter how we are placed in life. Rich or poor, man or woman, baby or elder. That goes for there we are too. The desert or the ocean, or the plains or the mountains.

There is this girl I know when she was very young, her life was hard. She grew up in a poor family. The father had a job and the mother did part time jobs. Her family was very poor she had a big family two sisters and two brothers. She did not get fancy chothes or have lots of toys. When she was five years old she met another girl at school, that lived down the road from her. They would play together outside and make mud pies. Sometimes go inside and they would make playdough.

About three years later her friend had moved away.She was a vary smart kid in school. But, the other kids would make fun of her because her clothes were not to there liking. She is aound ten years now her father had died and the family pet had goten ran over by a truck and died too. This is a time that friendship would be valuable to her.

She was really depressed. The only things that she had loved had gone. Her would was chrashing all around her. So she would read books and become a chartor. This is how she would creat friends that would not hurt her. After a while she got tierd of being chartors in books. Then one day she took a over dose of prescriptions drugs. All she thought was that there was going to be no more pain. But, her cousin from the states was coming out and was going to stay with her family. She saw her and called the hospital.

Her stomach was pumped and was going to alright. In a while her cousin became her close friend. Her cousin one day read some scription out of the bible. She heard that this man named Jesus Christ loved her. All she would have to was to ask him to come into her heart. She wanted to have a friend for life that would stay with her for life. She asked him to come into her heart. There was a wounder full change in her life. Now she has two friends.

That was one time when freindship really counted.

What is a friend? A friend is someone or something we all need. No one likes to go through life alone. Friends come in many shapes and sizes. Some friends may be stuffed toys or a security blanket, but the most common form is a human.

For instance. One time my brother wanted to go camping with some of his friends. I would usually hang around with them so my brothers friends invited me along. When I said I would go my brother planned a route that would be too hard for me. My brothers friends would go along with his idea whenever he was around, but when he left they made their own plan to help me keep up with the gang. I got along fine with my brother until his friends moved. He started getting me into trouble which didn't last long because his new friends didn't want to get caught and they thought I was nicer than my brother so they let me join their neighborhood club and they forced my brother to be nice to me or else he would be kicked out of the club.

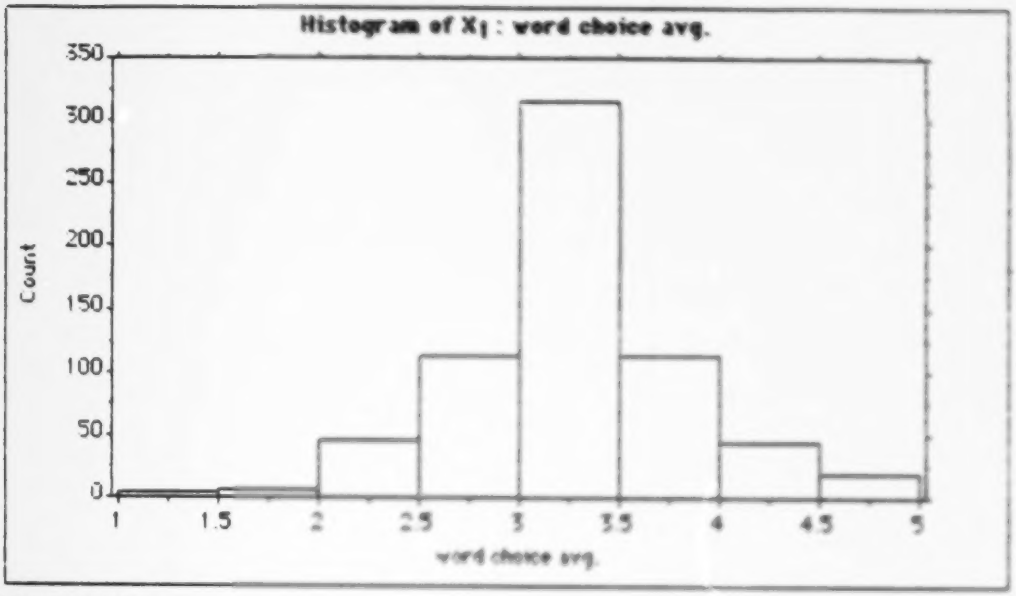
Another time friends came in handy was when all the neighbor kids were gone and I was dog sitting for my best friend who was down south. My parents and brother were downtown so I let the dog off the chain and wrestled with him til my parents and brother get home so I could have someone to play with. The dog wanted to chew on my shoulder instead of his bone. His teeth hurt after a few minutes, but I didn't scold him or hurt him because he was my friend. I would also talk to him just like he was a person. After all we are animals too.

Last year during the summer as I walked into the small store called Milk's. I saw a girl name Melanie. She was clerking at that time I walked in to the store. After I bought a few thing I stayed for while and started to talkto her. And I ended up staying with her for about six to nine hours in the store. After the store hours I walked her home and we talked about things the I shouldn't type in this story.

The next day I went to the same store and there she was again at the counter again clerking, then I stayed with her again for about the same time of hours I stayed with her yesterday. And we did that every day so thats what you might call a best friend or a imaginary story but we stop seeing each other when school started.

After our friendship was over we just started to talk about things that would not be so hard to understand. After a few weeks later we started to stay together again.

Trait 4: Word Choice
Score Distribution: Word Choice



STRENGTHS

The right word at the right moment is the heart of effective word choice. Raters look for a strong, precise vocabulary, but the language should sound natural, not forced, and should seem to suit the writer and the purpose of the paper. Stronger papers may show some flair for colorful or figurative language, but even more often, their strength lies in the writer's knack for using common words well. The result is vivid imagery that lets the reader feel he or she is right there, involved in what is happening.

Specifically, the stronger papers with respect to Word Choice are characterized by

1. A good vocabulary-words that sound right, not forced. The student writes to communicate, not to impress.

2. Precision and a sense of appreciation for the sound and rhythm of words.

3. A strong "skeleton" of specific, concrete nouns and energetic verbs-less dependence on long strings of adjectives or adverbs.

4. Avoidance of cliches or jargon, except for special effect.

5. A real effort to stretch, to find a better way or a new way to say it.

6. Vivid imagery that puts the reader right at the scene.

7. Originality, an ability to make the reader see the power of everyday words through a fresh twist.

8. Naturalness-writing that sounds the way the writer would probably tell it if talking right to the reader.

9. Expressive simplicity-an apparent joy in exploring language.

10. Rich language-words and phrases that are memorable for conveying meaning in a special way.

WEAKNESSES

By contrast, the weaker papers with respect to Word Choice were characterized by

1. Monotonous repetition.

2. Reliance on cliches.

3. A weak or sometimes forced vocabulary-almost as if the student had looked up every other word in a thesaurus.

4. Reliance on abstract words and generalities that made the student's real thoughts and feelings difficult to understand.

5. Carelessness in the use of language

6. Overuse of words and phrases such as:

*fun	*massive
*nice	*always there for me
*great	*sweet
*awesome	*helpful
*neat	*gross
*stuff	*...has become my whole life

Trait Description

SCORE POINT 5

The writer consistently selects words that convey the intended message in an interesting, precise and natural way. The result is full and rich, yet not overwhelming; every word carries its own weight.

- Words are specific, accurate, and suited to the subject. Imagery is strong.

- Lively, powerful verbs give the writing energy, visual appeal, and clarity.

- Vocabulary may be striking, colorful, or unusual - but the language isn't overdone.

- Expression is fresh and appealing, fun to read. The writer uses cliches or slang sparingly, and only for effect.

* The writer may experiment with uncommon words, or use common words in a delightful way.

* Figurative language, if used, as effective.

SCORE POINT 5 SAMPLE PAPERS

Very few papers were scored high in Word Choice. These two writers, however, show a strong command of language. They elicit strong images and delight in their skillful choice of words and phrases.

Now that I think back, Jason was a really good friend to me. I'm sad that I never see him anymore, I havent since that steamy August day that they buriyed him in the Clark county cemetary only two short years ago. Somehow, I feel he will always be near me.

Jason and John. John and Jason. That's how people referred to us, inseperable friends since preeschool; there was hardly ever one without the other, like lint and carpet we stuck together.

I still dont quite know what made me like him so much. Mostly, I admired him. When we were younger, he was the captain of the little league team, and I was the first base man. He was always thinking of interesting and dareing things to do, which made him a kick to hang around.

It all started on a Humid, Sticky summer day in Clarksville, Tennasee. "AND IT LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER BROILING DAY AS THE SUNNY WEATHER FROM FLORIDA CONTINUES..." The clock radio spoke louder that morning than it ever seemed to befere. I groaned and rolled over, knocking the clock onto the floor.

"John? You up yet?" My mom's voice trailed up the stairs. I opened my eyes to my messy room. A can of exploded mousse sat on the dresser along with an unmatched sock, a half a sandwitch from a few days ago and several tapes that I had gotten for my birthday. I rolled off of the bed with a =THUD= groaning again, I got up and went downstairs to where my mom was making Bacon, eggs and juice.

"Now Honey, you know that I want you to eat before you leave!"

"But mom! I'll get something at work!"

I peered blearaly at my watch. "11:30?" I gasped "I'm sorry mom, I gotta go, Im late!!"

I started the car and 15 minutes later I was at the 7-ELEVEN that I had lined up as my summer job. It had all worked out so perfectly. Jason was working at the arcade next door and I was working here, in the store. There were adjoining walls so we could talk all we wanted and work at the same time.

I was putting more hot dogs in the machine when a voice yelled from behind..

"Hey, John!!"

I turned around to see Jason's freckle face and red hair pertruding from the door by the wall.

"Looks like Harley Davidson just pulled in!" He was laughing as he pointed out of the huge plate - glass windows aligning the front wall of the store. I winced, noticing a grungy, spike and leather clad fat boy pulling up to the gas pump on his low-rider.

He staggerd to the door, apparently drunk and said "Fill'er up" Upon these words emmitting from his mouth, a long gaseous belch emerged from the depths of his insides.

"On pump four?" I asked

"No, the bag. you dumb idiot!!"

He stood up straight and pulled a plastic bag and a twenty two from inside of his oilly leather coat, pointing it at my head.

Jason, who had been watching this from across the room suddenly ran out.

"Wait!" he yelled running twards me. My eyes grew wide as he ran past to the man.

"Its okay, we wont turn you in if you leave right now." He stayed calm, staring stedily into the man's eyes.

"Are you nuts??" I was asking in ny brain. I had filled the bag and handed it to the man. While on the floor, I was trying to locate the button for the police, but since I had only started a week before, I hadn't been shown yet.

"Who in the Hell are you?" the man guestioned.

"Dont you dare hurt him, or so help me god, I will kill you." Jason's request sounded more like a threatening demand.
Sweat was steaming down my face and I felt as if I was going to cry.

The man looked at Jason, then me and started to laugh. He laughed until his face turned red and he fell on the floor. As the fat man fell, Jason fried to grab it but it hit the floor, fireing on impact, shooting a bullet through my best-friend's chest. I stared in Horror as he fell to the ground in silence.

The man, haveing been startled by the blast, looked up. I ran to where Jason was and grabbed the gun, then I called the police.

I went to court to testify against the man, whom I later found out to be Walter _____. he got a 70 year sentance, but he'll be up for parolle probably before 10 is served

Now that I think of it, Jason probably saved my life that day and what could be more show of pure friendship and love than that?

Though no one will ever take his place, I have to on living, without Jason

Brad _____. That name sticks in my mind like a hypodermic needle in my rear. We were in the fifth grade together, a time when we thought nuclear annihilation was a technical term for micro-waving your dinner. Brad and I had just discovered the joy and dangers of M-80s

His dad, an international bisnessman, had brought Brad a package of M-80s from the Orient. Brad called me up on the telephone immediately and told me of his recent gift. I rushed right over to his house with things him and I could blow up.

We went to our favorite place, a fenced up vacant lot with lots of plants and trees. We immediately opend the package of M-80's; there were six, three for Brad and three for me. I tied one of my M-80 to my older sister's Favorite doll which she graiously "lent" to me. Brad lit the fuse, and we watched in delight how the M-80 completely obliterated the doll.

Then a brilliant idea came to me, why not throw a lit M-80 in the air and see if we could blow up a bird. Brad seemed to like the idea. So I lit one of mine and threw it up in the air. Not straight up, but just enough for it to land in the street. I looked at Brad, he looked at me, a panic rose in both of us. The fuse was getting smalller and smaller, a blue Ford pinto was making its way up the road. My hands started to shake spastically, time started to slow down. I begin to hear the theme song for the Twilight Zone. Rod Serling suddenly appeared and started to say "This is dimension of sight... sound. As you see the sign post up ahead, you are now in The Twilight Zone!"

The fuse was growing smaller, the Pinto coming closer, smaller, closer, smaller, closer. To say I was worried would be the understatement of the year.

The fuse disappered into the body of the M-80, through a series of complex chemical reactions, which I will not venture into explaining, and a little spontaneous internal combustion, it exploded. A deafening "pop" reverbated, through the alleys and off buildings, a thousand points of light dilates Brad's and mine pupils. This, unfortuneately, to not signify a kinder, gentler nation.

The Pinto came to a screeching halt, a huge fat man opened the door and immediately hopped the fence, suprisely agile for weight. As any red blooded American fifth grade boys would do, we ran our hearts out. We reached for our emergency hole-in-the-fence-all-purpose-get-away system. I got through easily but Brad got his pants stuck in the fence. He bade me to leave him, and as any true friend I did!

Two hours later I was at home still recovering from the frightning experience. And I was expecting the cops to come by and verbally repremand me in the error of my fooish actions. But they didn't, Brad didn't rat on me as I suspected he would. You see, in a fifth grade world, the common motto is "All for one or if the blame needs put on somebody else and save your hide." He broke the time-honored tradition to save his best friend, me.

From then Brad and I shared a special friendship until he moved to Iowa the next month.

SCORE POINT 3

The writer's word choice is adequate to convey meaning, but the language tends toward the ordinary. The writer doesn't consistently reach for the "best" way to say something, but instead often settles for the first word or phrase that comes to mind. The result is a sort of "generic paper" that sounds familiar, routine, or commonplace.

* Language communicates quite well, but without a sense of satisfying fullness or power; the reader has the feeling it could have been written better.

* Imagery may be weakened by overuse of abstract, general language.

* Though the reader can interpret the meaning quite readily, some words lack precision or vigor.

* Attempts at the unusual, colorful or difficult are not always successful. The language may seem overdone or calculated to impress rather than natural.

* Though an occasional phrase may catch the reader's eye, cliches, redundancies and hackneyed phrases pop up with disappointing frequency; there are few surprises or enticing twists.

SCORE POINT 3 SAMPLE PAPERS

Word Choice is the only trait for which the majority of writers received average scores. These stories typify an average score for Word Choice. The second story is a good example of a writer who tried unsuccessfully to use more sophisticated vocabulary.

There are many things in this world that we learn to live without. One of the most difficult of these is friendship. This is most dramatic when it is experienced at such a tender age.

I never had any friends when I was younger. It wasn't that no one liked me, I just never needed anyone. But that first day in the sixth grade would change the way I felt about friends forever.

She was very attractive with buitiful blond hair that was like waves of gold. Her body was slim, yet in amazing form. She moved with perfect balance and her voice was like that of an angel.

When we met it was like it was made to happen. We had already become good friends by the time school was out. I walked her home and we talked some more.

With each passing day we became better friends. More and more we opened up to each other and shared each other's deepest secrets. It was a different kind of friendship between a boy and a girl that one might think. By no means were we boyfriend and girlfriend, we were just good friends.

Friendship can be the greatest gift in the world.

I sit back and I watch. I notice that people all around me, my peers, friends had things happening to them, that I don't think would ever happen to me. My friends, trying hard to grow up or fit in, or cope with problems at home. Alot of them just can't do it. So I help them. I know they need it. They can't go about in an indefinite routine, void of aid, and try to sort things out for themselves. It could only ruin them. Basically, I don't care about what's going on to people around me. I'm indifferent; however, if I'm aware that the person is on the edge of their exsistence, depending on the solution to

that problem, I appoint myself to help that person. I don't actually solve their problem, I notice that I basically maintain morale. I convince my friend taht they're still them. You certainly can't change that . But make the best of yourself. No matter what you do, or what goes on around you or to you, you're still you. Let people think of you what they wish. That's their picture of you. That's how they see you. But being you, you have an advantage. You can see yourself, and you can also know yourself. What you can do is change the undesirable ways people see you, by convincing them of your true self. For example, people might be convinced you're a snob, and they lead others to think of you that way, based on what they see. They see you walking down the hall, looking straight ahead, and only acknowledging people who address you on your way to your destination. They see that , and its proof to their suspicions; as a result, you're classified as a snob, and you were probably judged on that one instance. What they probably aren't aware of, is you were probably late for a meeting, or you were preoccupied, thinking about what you had planned later in the day, or even that you may be shy, and feel funny or uncomfortable just walking up to anyone around and saying hi, or looking at strangers and smiling, or it could be you did all of that , and the reception wasn't very welcoming, so you don't try again because you don't enjoy being reacted to that way. I'm not saying that you aren't a snob, and you really don't want ot talk to the lower society people; however, you just can't tell by looking can you? Why do people feel they have to judge one another? Why not understand and respect other people's need for human dignity? A wrong notion could devestate someone in this petty society. That's why you need friends. Not only for social reasons, or someone to hang around with. You need someone to talk to, or who can understand you. Someone who really knows you, and what you're all about. Say you had a friend in the group who was determining if you were a snob or not. That person knows that you were probably preoccupied, or that you really do feel uncomfortable just trying to impose yourself on others, so he or she will stand up for you, stating your reasons for your actions. That person may prevent any misjudging cast on you. A friend tries to protect you, because everyone knows, no-one is invincible. Even the most popular, self-confident, self-righteous person you know, probably can't stand the thought of anyone hating him or her. Selfdoubt is predator among young people, always looking for a falter in pride or dignity to attack, and have you succomb to your fate of how people see you. Once you actually agree with how people see you, its over. You've become what you're labeled as. That's why you need friends. To remind you, only you know who or what you really are, and no matter what, don't give in to notions. I try to do that. I had many instances where my friends called me up, or talked to me, not being able to reassure themselves that they aren't bad, that things are out of their control, or they're totally unsure of what they really are. They're dangerously close to agreeing, then becoming what people see them as. That's when I remind them, then convince them of who they really are. Let other people think what they think, you can't change that now, but you are really, what you are. Once they remember that again, they'll be okay. Those are the cases when you really need, and can count on, true good friends. Those are friends that I want, and need. I don't go through what alot of them do, for I have my standards and I know what's good for me, but matters out of my control such as divorce or death or household problems, I'll definitely need someone there for me.

SCORE POINT 1

The writer is struggling with a limited vocabulary, often groping for words and phrases to convey meaning. Meaning may be difficult to determine (e.g., the writer says one thing but seems to mean another), or else the language is so vague and abstract that only the broadest, most general sorts of messages are conveyed.

* Writing is often characterized by monotonous repetition, overwhelming reliance on worn, threadbare expressions, or heavy reliance on the prompt (topic) itself for key words and phrases.
* Imagery is very weak or absent; the reader lacks sufficient concrete details to construct any mental picture.
* Words tend to be consistently dull, colorless and trite.
* In some instances, word choice may seem careless, imprecise, or just plain wrong.

SCORE POINT 1 SAMPLE PAPERS

These stories are two of the very few that were rated low in Word Choice.

Well I need friends, Because friends are good to have around. when your alone, friends Love friends Because friends are really close to each other when a friend need a hand his/her friend helps there friends, that's why we have friend.

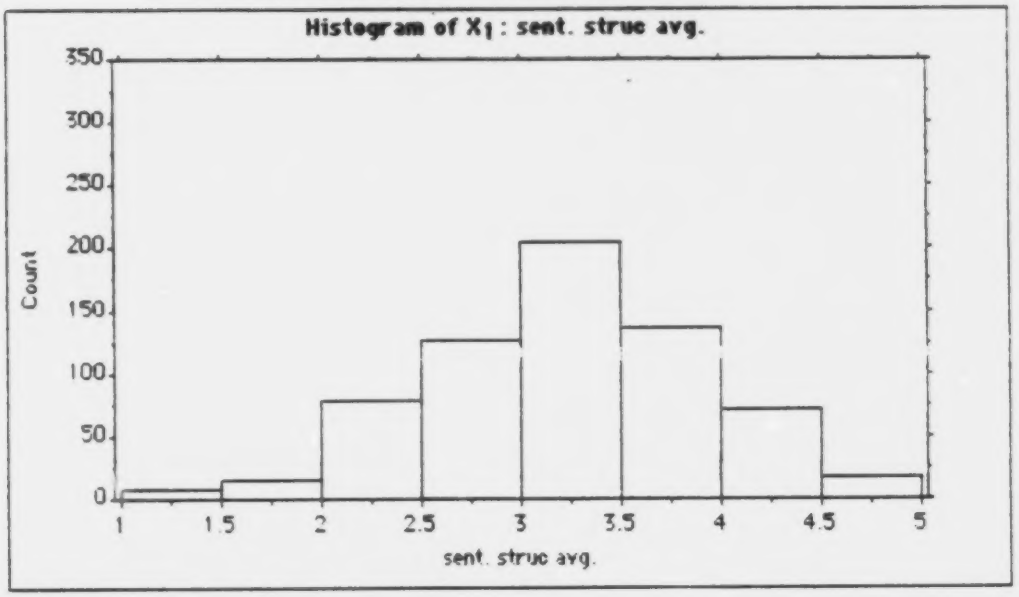
Friend make your day come alive. They make you Laff and make you cry. But that why there called friends, well I tell you A friend is really cool, But his more than afriend his like a Brother to me. For instands Jamie CEG____. I like him like a Brother, Because we went through thick and thin together. we laff together we even cry together. But some stuff we done do together. Man Jamie is a really cole guy his nice, friendly and he well help anyone that's need help. thats a real friend to have around. Everything that I wrote about a friend up on top of the paper it fits with Jamie. Plus Jamie has alot of friends that he like. him to very Very much. Plus there nice to Jamie

We all need friends because friends are people you can count on and people you know you can tRust they are people that have decided to be your friend because they like you as a person.

Friends in more than just one place. They are people you can tell them That you will be in there town and they will always want to see you, while you are there.

You can make new friends by meet people that are your friends friend Then you can all do things together like friends do. You can relie on them to be a friend.

Trait 5: Sentence Structure
Score Distribution: Sentence Structure



STRENGTHS

In rating sentence structure, raters often read papers aloud, listening to the flow and rhythm of the language; How does it "play" to the ear when you put it all together? Raters look not only for correctness, but also for grace, fluency and power. Stronger papers are characterized by direct, energetic sentences free of such problems as wordiness, awkward sentence patterns, dangling modifiers, nonparallel construction and so forth.

Specifically, the stronger papers with respect to Sentence Structure tend to

1. Sound fluent-to have an "easy on the ear" flow and rhythm when read aloud.

2. Show some variety in sentence length and structure.

3. Move easily from one sentence to another, with smooth, well handled transitions.

4. Use fragments effectively, if at all. (Fragments, if stylistically effective, were considered acceptable. Professional writers do, after all, use fragments. Thus, raters simply asked, "Does it work?")

5. Show "sentence sense"-a real awareness of how sentences are put together, and of where one sentence should stop and the next begin.

6. Be extremely easy to read-either silently or aloud.

7. Have a natural phrasing and rhythm that emulates effective oral speech patterns.

WEAKNESSES

The weaker papers, by contrast, tend to:

1. Contain awkward constructions that make reading difficult.
2. Jar the reader with awkward or unnatural rhythms.
3. Sound disjointed, awkward, or rambling.
4. Wander aimlessly with little indication of where one sentence should stop and the next begin.
5. Bump along with short, choppy sentences-or drone endlessly via one long unpunctuated sentence.
6. Repeat sentence patterns (subject-verb or subject-verb-object) with monotonous regularity.
7. Contain some irregular word patterns that reveal a lack of "sentence sense"-that is, little feeling for how words naturally fit together to form sentences.
8. Require re-reading because the way the words are strung together obscures the ideas.

Trait Description

SCORE POINT 5

The paper is fluid, and reads easily throughout. It has an easy-on-the ear flow and rhythm when read aloud. Sentences have a strong and rhetorically effective structure that makes reading enjoyable.

* Sentence structure clearly conveys meaning, with no ambiguity.
* Writing sounds natural and fluent, with effective phrasing.
* Sentences are appropriately concise.
* Varied sentence structure and length add interest.
* Fragments, if used, are stylistically appropriate. They seem right.

SCORE POINT 5 SAMPLE PAPERS

This paper is a good example of those that scored high in the Sentence Structure trait. Notice how easy it is to read and how naturally rhythmic it sounds.

When my dad and I first moved from Seattle to Anchorage, I thought it was going to be great. I visualized Alaska as a wild, wilderness full of bears, fish, and moose. I thought that despite the smallness of the population, I would make friends quickly. How wrong I was.

When I moved to Anchorage in May of 1988, I was looking foreward to living in the biggest state in America. I was looking foreward to seeing moose walk through my back yard. And yes, I was even looking foreward to the long, cold, and Icy winter. During the months of summer, I didn't make any friends. At the time I thought it was normal because I was working all the time and was rarely home. I was lonely but thought, "I'll make friends once school starts." On the morning of the first day of school I was ready to go as soon as I woke up. I practicaly ran the one half mile to the bus stop to be sure I caught it. When I got on the bus I thought, "Well, I'm on my way to Service High". Service, The richest and one of the biggest schools in the Anchorage area. As soon as I stepped through the door, I felt out of place. I was wearing a long, black trench coat and a black "Spawn 'till you die" shirt. All of the kids seemed to be wearing designer clothes. Some of them looked at me like I was an interesting form of insect that accidentaly had been carried in from the gutter on the sole of somones shoe. It went on like that for a week. I studied alone, I ate alone, and I sat in class alone.

During that time, only one person talked to me. And that was to ask me if I was a Devil Worshipper. At the end of my first week at Service, my mother came up from Homer to visit. Immediately I made plans to move in with her. As soon as I got to Homer, I made friends. Since I moved from Anchorage, I have wondered why people refused to talk to me. Maybe it was my clothes, my look, or my attitude. All I know is that I have never felt more lonely.I was surrounded by people, yet I couldn't talk to them.

SCORE POINT 3

Sentences are understandable, but tend to be mechanical rather than fluid. While sentences are usually correct, the paper is not characterized by a natural fluency and grace. Occasional flaws or awkward constructions may necessitate re-reading.

* Sentence structure sometimes clearly conveys meaning - and sometimes not. Structural problems may sometimes create ambiguity.

* Some sentences lack energy, character or effectiveness (e.g., they may be hampered by awkward structure, unnecessary complexity, roundabout expression, wordiness, dangling modifiers, ineffective use of passive voice, or repetitious beginnings - "I did this," "I did that").

* Sentence variety (length or structure) tends to be more the exception than the rule.

* Fragments, if used, may sometimes be ineffective or confusing.

SCORE POINT 3 SAMPLE PAPERS

These papers represent balanced strengths and weaknesses for Sentence Structure. Although there is some effective use of varied sentence length and fragments, they are not as naturally appealing as the previous story.

Friendship - meaning the condition or relation of being friends, is something everyone will most likely experience. I feel that everyone needs friends. They are there to confort you and make you feel as if you are needed.

Many times I have depended on my friends to help me through the hard days. My best friend was my boyfriend, we went out for a long time. he was always there when I was upset. He had a special way of letting me know that I was loved. Not only were we boyfriend and girlfriend but we were also best friends.

Friends can make you feel good in more ways than one. If they are a true friend you can tell them anything They also are there to cheer you up when you are feeling blue. (At least my friends do anyway.

These last few months I've really needed a friend. Someone I could lean on. My best friend just recently left me. When he did I was upset. I made some new friends but I am still looking for more. I feel that the more friends I have the better.

A friend to me is someone that you can rely upon, trust, and call on when you are in doubt. When I am a friend to someone, I am a true one and I appreciate that in return.

Thunder crashed across the sky. Lisa ran faster, trying desperatly to escape it's roáring fury. God was punishing her for saying those things to Sydney, she thought, all those awful things. Suddenly she tripped on some loose dirt and came crashing down to the ground.

She lay on the ground sobbing. Why did she have to get into a fight with Sydney, why? It was stupid. Who cares if she bought the prom dress Lisa had been eyeing. It's a free world. But now it was to late. In her fury Lisa had run off into the woods, her favorite refuge. A storm had moved in and now she could see no more than a blind mouse.

A soft hand touched Lisa's chee Gently wiping away the tears.. Sydney bent over Lisa and wiped the dirt from her tear-stained cheeks with a soft cloth. She helped Lisa to her feet and the two friends slowly started on the long treck home.

SCORE POINT 1

The writing is generally awkward and therefore hard to read aloud. It does not sound natural. Sentences tend to be choppy, incomplete, or so rambling and irregular that it may be difficult to tell where one should end and the next begin.

* Because sentence structure frequently does not function to convey meaning, reader may pause several times to question what is meant.

* Sentences lack both fluency and correctness. The writer may not write in conventional sentences at all. Or, sentences may seem stiffly constructed, disjointed, endlessly meandering (e.g., many run-ons), or nonsensical.

* Short, choppy sentences relentlessly monotonous rhythms or patterns (e.g., subject-verb or subject-verb-object over and over) that produce a jarring or sing-song effect.

* Fragments are confusing or ineffective. Writer seems to have little grasp of how words fit together, or of where one idea logically stops and the next begins.

SCORE POINT 1 SAMPLE PAPERS

These papers are weak in Sentence Structure. The first is quite choppy and the second is only one sentence long making them both very difficult to read.

Friends are the most Important thing in life if you don't have a friend you will have no one to talk to when your feeling down, or when your at home.

It is very good to have a friend when your mom, dad, sister, brother, cuzen or Granpaw past away because that is when I think you really need a friend Thats when I need a friend.

When my upa died I Just couldn't Believe it when my brother told me, I said, "no way he didn't die But, I was wrong. He did die, I didn't show that I was hurt but when I was alone I cried, That was the time I needed a friend really bad. I didn't want anyone to see me cry so I held it in.

I found a friend But he was my friend for a month or two , I thought he was going to be my friend for a long time but, I was wrong.

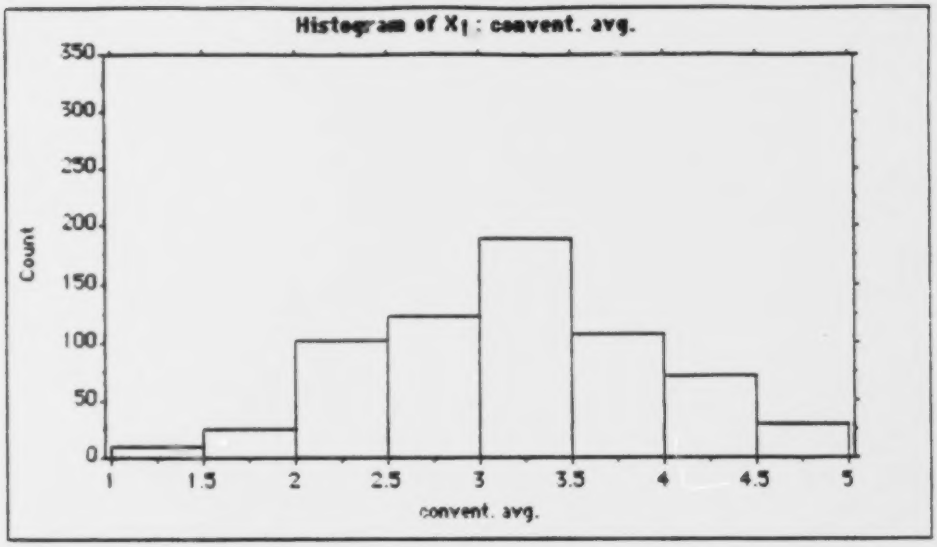
The I found my second friend he was fun to be with me and him use to talk about all the things that bothered us Like our parents and brothers or sisters, we didn't talk much about our selve's but most of our time we had fun.

I had a Third friend he was like my second friend. friends, we had alot of fun together Like riding around with snow machine's and three wheelers but it was a short friendship.

The fourth friend we are still friends I gave him my small tenies and we played nintendo. at his house and we watched vidieo's at my house we had alot of fun together and I wish or I hope our friendship last's a long time because he's my friend and I'm his friend.

I was riding my bike down a street one day and I saw a boy on the side of the rode so I asked him if he would by my friend he said yes so we both went home and got B.B. guns from our houses and went hunting we had lots and lots of fun but then he started shooting at me so I ran away later he came to me and said sorry so I forgave him and we rode our bikes together for the rest of the day the next day we played guns all day until my mom called me for dinner she made me wash my hands and I had a hamberger it was yum yum good I got done really, really fast so I could play with my friend more we went and started to swing on the swing next to my house and that was really fun I like my friend and I think he likes me.

Trait 6: Conventions
Score Distribution: Conventions



AN EXPLANATION OF HOW CONVENTIONS ARE SCORED

Notice that this trait covers grammar, capitalization, punctuation, usage, spelling, and paragraphing. In reviewing the results, it is important to be aware that raters did not count errors or make marks of any kind on the papers during scoring. There are several reasons for this:

1. Marks made by one rater on the paper inevitably bias other raters who review the paper.

2. Counting errors is extremely time consuming and can literally double the cost of the assessment.

3. It is virtually impossible to achieve high inter-rater consistency regarding the specific number of errors present in a piece of writing because raters do not share the same priorities (one attends closely to spelling, another to punctuation, and so on), and do not always agree (not even the most up-to-date English handbooks always agree) on what is correct or acceptable.

4. In order to achieve fairness with error counts, one must also count the number of words in each student's paper. Otherwise, a student who writes three pages, and has more opportunity to make errors, will tend to be penalized in comparison to the student who writes only a short paragraph and has little opportunity for error.

5. Error-count approaches tend to penalize the student who takes a risk. Suppose two students are writing in response to the same task, for example, and neither knows how to use quotation marks correctly--but one attempts it and the other doesn't. One student will have "errors" for trying something a bit beyond her/his control. The other student's paper will not show that error, but the level of attempt will be less.

6. Most important (practical considerations aside), there is no empirical evidence to support the theory that counting and marking errors on a student's paper will improve that student's writing.

In this assessment, therefore, Conventions were scored as a function of readability--that is to say, the relative ease with which the reader could get through the paper. At the 5.0 level, Conventions actually enhance readability. The paper does not have to be flawless, but the writer does need to demonstrate a good grasp of writing conventions that helps make the paper extremely easy to read and understand. It may help to think of it this way: a 5.0 paper (with respect to Conventions) is sufficiently polished (or very nearly so) to be ready for inclusion in a school anthology of student writing with little or no additional editing needed.

At the 3.0 level, problems with conventions become noticeable and impair readability somewhat. It is still relatively easy to decipher meaning, but an occasional sentence might require re-reading, or an occasional misspelled word might need to be sounded out before it can be identified. In general, though, the reader can move along at a fairly fast--if bumpy--pace. A 3.0 paper would require moderate editing and polishing before it could be considered ready for inclusion in a school anthology.

At the 1.0 level, errors are so abundant that the paper is truly difficult to read. Virtually every sentence requires re-reading or slow going. Errors jump out at the reader, and are consistently distracting. Spelling errors tend to be frequent, even on simple words. Punctuation tends to be haphazard, wrong, or missing altogether. Paragraphing also tends to be haphazard or absent. Grammatical problems are common. Capitals are used incorrectly or inconsistently. The reader must pause frequently to puzzle over meaning or simply to decipher and decode, and some words or phrases may be hard to make out even after careful scrutiny. A 1.0 level paper would require extensive editing before it could be published in a school anthology of student writing.

SOME IMPORTANT REMINDERS ABOUT CONVENTIONS SCORES

There are some additional considerations which need to be taken into account when evaluating the Conventions scores:

1. Handwriting was NOT considered in scoring Conventions. That is a paper with very poor handwriting might be difficult to read, but if the conventions were well handled (and this was often the case), the paper was not scored down.

2. Papers that were essentially correct, but showed only the most modest level of attempt (e.g., no quotation marks, no complex or compound sentences, no variety in end punctuation-periods only) generally received 4s. One could not fairly say that errors impaired readability; they did not. Yet it was the consensus of the group of raters that such a paper did not merit as high a score as the paper in which the writer attempted more difficult constructions and generally succeeded.

3. Papers that were flawless mechanically were not necessarily strong papers in other respects. It often happened that a paper which received very high scores on Conventions tended to be rather weak in Ideas and Content and in Voice. Similarly, papers that were very strong Ideas and Content and in Voice were not necessarily strong in Conventions. It is important to be aware of such differences in interpreting the data. Typically, such differences will not be made clear in holistic scoring. And in fact, a mechanically flawless paper may have a strong advantage in a holistic system because it tends to create a positive first impression that may bias the reader's view about the quality of the paper as a whole. On the other hand, a mechanically flawed paper may negatively bias a reader in much the same way. One of the primary advantages in analytical scoring is its capacity to identify for us the positive-negative contrasts within each paper, reminding us that a writer who does one thing very well will not necessarily do everything well.

Trait Description

SCORE POINT 5

The writer's skillful use of standard writing conventions (grammar, capitalization, punctuation, usage, spelling, paragraphing) enhances readability. There are no glaring errors. In fact, while the paper may not be flawless, errors tend to be so minor that the reader can easily overlook them unless searching for them specifically. (Deliberate, controlled deviations from convention - in dialogue, for instance - are acceptable, provided they enhance the overall effect.)

- Grammar (e.g., noun-verb agreement; noun-pronoun agreement; verb tense; forms of nouns, verbs, pronouns and modifiers) is essentially correct.
- Punctuation is smooth and enhances meaning. Informalities, such as dashes or contractions, are allowed.
- Spelling is correct, even on more difficult words.
- Usage is generally correct, or acceptable given the purpose of the writing. The writer avoids double negatives (e.g., couldn't hardly) and nonstandard usage (e.g., could of been, more better, she had ought to do it, irregardless, leave me figure this out). Informalities (e.g., you will find rather than the more formal one will find) are acceptable.
- Paragraphing (i.e., indenting) works in harmony with the inherent organization of the paper.

SCORE POINT 5 SAMPLE PAPERS

These writers all had strong control of Conventions which enhances the readability of their stories.

Me and my best friend, Stephanie, were arguing again. It seemed like all we ever did these days was argue. This particular spat happened to be about whether we would go swimming today or tomorrow. I had really looked forward to going all morning, but then Stephie suggested we go to the mall instead. The mall??!! For heavens sake, here we are in the middle of a heat wave, and she wants to go shopping. Well we argued back and forth some more, and I finally gave in. I always do. Swimming tomorrow, today, the mall.

As we rode our bikes towards the mall, I thought about how I always give into Stephanie, and how she never thinks of me, only herself. I glanced over at her. She had a serene smile on her face, like a queen does when she sits on her throne. I felt my anger start to surface, and then I felt guilty. Why should I be upset? She was my best friend after all. Best friends aren't supposed to hate each other. But I couldn't help it. The more I looked at her, the madder I got.

We pedaled on another half mile or so in total silence. I was relieved when I saw the rampway heading up to the mall's parking spaces. We finally started to reach the top of the steep hill, when a loud screech of tires made me lose my train of thoughts. We were taking the last few steps up, with Stephanie in front. I saw the car and I knew what was going to happen before I could've done anything about it. The car came screeching around the corner, didn't bother halting at the stop sign, and headed down the ramp with Stephie in it's path. It was all over with so fast, time seemed to stand still. My mind replayed that awful scene over and over again, and I would never forget the look on her face as long as I live. Over and over I kept seeing her eyes wide with horror, with the realization of what was about to happen. Over and over I could see the car slamming into Stephanie's bike, and her flying off and through the air, her body as limp as a ragdoll. Then she lay lifelessly on the warm pavement.

I must've just stood there, to shocked to do anything, because a sharp and sudden shake brought me back into the real world. A man was there looking into my eyes, telling me that him and his wife had seen the whole thing, and help would arrive shortly. Seconds later I heard the wail of sirens approaching. After that my knees just buckled from under me, and everything went black.

I woke up in the hospital to a sea of faces swarming over me, and people talking about what had happened in hushed whispers. Instantly the events of the afternoon replayed in my mind, and I almost passed out again. Then everybody left except for one lady doctor. She looked at me and smiled as she proceeded to tell me about Stephie. She was in critical condition, but yes, she would make it.

Relief flooded my body and I started to cry. I remembered earlier how mad I was and how much I hated her. What if she would've died??

The next few months were long and hard ones. Stephie was released from the hospital about one month after she was admitted. Almost a year of physical therapy had followed, because she had severely damaged her legs.

My mother and the doctors say that part of what helped Stephanie get through this was me and my neverending love for her. Through all the sad feelings, frustration, and pain, I was there right by her side. I guess that's what friends are for.

"We all need friends," that's what the English teacher had said. "Hump...what a joke!" I mummbled under my breath as I flopped down carelessly on my bed. "I don't need friends, all they do is hurt me." I thought to myself as I reflected back on the days events. Picking lint balls off of a sweater lying on my bed I began to remember.

It all started when my parents decided to put me in a differant school. My best friend and I were both excited and after begging her parents, for what seemed like hours, they finaly conscented to let her go too.

Cassie and I registered together, got most of the same classes, bought school clothes and talked nonstop about what the year would hold.

And then...today, the very first day of school, I got to my locker and Cassie wasn't there. "Maybe she's not here yet." I thought as I fumbled for my History book. "She's my best friend, she'll be here, right?" Wrong!! She didn't show up before lunch so I called her house.

"No, she's not here," her mom answered. "She's going to a differant school. Didn't Cassie tell you?"

No, she hadn't told me, as a matter of fact she hasn't even called me in the last three or four days. I think about the dial tone after Cassie's mom hung up. It seemed to be laughing at me.

"Some friend?!" it seemed to be saying.

I went through the rest of the day on a daze. Why hadn't my "best friend" told me. I was more hurt than angry.

"Ring." the telephone broke my depressing thoughts.

"Hello," I hear myself grumble, not really caring who was on the other end of the line.

"Hi, Rita? It's me Cassie." I recognize her voice.

"I have to tell you something, " she says.

"Yah I bet you do." I think to myself but don't say anything.

"You didn't get my letter did you?"

"No." I reply, "Why?"

"Cause I explained to you that I wouldn't be able to go to that school because of the buses. They don't run from my house to that school. Our phone's been screwed up so I wasn't able to call and I had a cold so my mom wouldn't let me out of the house to use someones telephone. I'm so sorry, Rita. I wanted to be together this year. But we can still do things on weekends?!"

I hear her questioning voice.

"Your not mad at me are you?" She questions.

"No, of couse not." I answer, already feeling better. "So it wasn't her fault, huh?" I think to myself as Cassie babbles on about some "cute" guy at her school.

"Rita!! Come set the table for dinner." I hear my mother yelling from down stairs.

"Cassie, I gotta go, but I'll call you later, o.k.?"

"O.K. Still best friends?"

"Of course we're still best friends!"

I hang up the phone and flop back onto my bed, knocking my favorite stuffed animal onto the floor.

"Hey." I think, "Maybe even I need friends?!"

"Rita, come set the....."

Signing yearbooks and school pictures is all a bunch of bologna. You always have to write something nice, and mention friendship in some sort or fashion. For example. This might be on the back of a school picture...

Amy,

Remember when we went 4-wheeling, and no matter what we did, we always had fun together. I hope we can do it again soon! You're such a good friend!

Love Jen '89

...Yeah, sure we had a good time, but the part about "let's do it again", well give me a break! Now that she has a boyfriend, that takes up all of her time, theres no way we could ever have fun (like that) together again. Sure we could try, if he was out of town. In actuality we wouldn't have fun because Jen would always be thinking about him (her boyfriend).

Heres another good note in a yearbook...

Jamie,

Wow we've had so much fun together over the years. I don't have to tell you how much I value your friendship. You were always there for me. Thank you so much!

Love Tonya

...Sure I was always there for her, every time she was so drunk she couldn't help herself. I don't really enjoy having fun up to that extent. Its no wonder why she doesn't have to tell me how much she values my friendhip, she couln't remember (only that I was there).

Sometimes I don't always think I need friends, because tney're not the friend (helping, listening, caring), I am. On the other hand if they didn't have a friend like me I don't think they would ever make it.

Friendship valuable in one way or another to every one. May they be drunk, quiet, in love, or just hanging out there some where, alone. Everyone should have someone who cares. Even me!

SCORE POINT 3

Errors in writing conventions are noticeable and begin to impair readability. Reader can follow what is being said overall, but may need to pause or re-read on occasion.

* Occasional problems in grammar disrupt the flow of the writing. For example, agreement may be inconsistent; or there may be shifts in tense, improper verb forms (e.g., lay down here), improper pronoun forms (theirselves, me and Jim will go), use of adjectives for adverbs (he did good), and so on.

* Punctuation, capitalization and spelling errors may be sufficiently frequent or serious to momentarily distract the reader.

* Some usage problems (e.g., double negatives, use of nonstandard expressions such as irregardless) may be evident.

* Paragraphing is attempted, but paragraphs may not always begin at the right places. As a result, paragraph structure (indenting) does not always complement the paper's inherent organization.

SCORE POINT 3 SAMPLE PAPERS

These papers represent balanced strengths and weaknesses for Conventions. It is interesting that although the first writer was rated only average in his use of Conventions, he received high scores in Ideas and Content and in Voice.

"Man it's cold." Tim commented to himself. Tim is a 4 foot tall sandy blonde 8 year old. Tim is walking hom from another day of school. As Tim is walking thoughts of things that had happened go through his mind. Just then he remembered he forgot his Math homework. "Oh well, I wasn't going to do it anyway." He thought.

As he continued walking down the lonely snow covered street he thought of his bestfriend Greg. Greg is about 5 inches taller than Tim and plenty stronger. Greg has reddish brown hair and he has a few freckles. Greg is also fairly popular with everyone. No one ever wants to bother or bug him for fear of getting clobbered. He hasn't gotten into any fights except one. And that occasion is the one I'm going to write about.

Tim had just walked into the door of Mr. _____'s math class when Tim heard Joe the class bully say that Tim and he were going to fight right after class. Tim ignored the comment. He just walked over to his desk and sat down readying himself for another enlightening lecture on how dividing can change your entire life.

Tim pulled his notebook that was full of the prior days note tacking. The tardy bell rang with a high shrill. Just as the bell concluded it's annoying disturbance a girl snuck in. Then Mr. _____ made his entrance.

Mr. _____ is a short Japenese man that wears blue slacks and a blue dress T-shirt everday except Wendsday when he wears black slocks. His hair is greased over to one side and he has a incredibly high voice. This man either had a bad childhood or he is just a incredible nerd.

Mr. _____ walked over to his file cabinet which is about 3 inches taller than he is. He took the over-head projector of the cabinet and took it over to the grey typing table. Since Mr. _____ is so short when he pulls down the movie screen he has to jump. This always makes the kids in the class laugh because when he jumps his fat goes a flapping everywhere. It's one of the few pleasures in the class. But you would have to be quick in order to see it. He sneaks around until he doesn't think anyone's looking and then he jumps.

Well after the lecture on how to divide there was 5 minutes left so Mr. _____ hurried around the room to make sure that everyone evening was ruined by home work: The bell rang.

As all the students jumped from their desks and made a mad dash for the door Tim sorted his notes and stood up. He glanced arround the room to see who was left and there was a person. It was Joe. Tim didn't think anything about until he got to the door. He reached for the door handle and turned the sweaty knob. As he pushed the door Joe pushed him out into the hall and landed on his head.

Tim jumped up and said "Why the ---- did yo do that you *!Q"$" or something to that effect. The two of them started fighting and a mob circled around them. No one stepped in for fear of getting hit in the crossfire. After about two minutes Joe had Tim on the cold, hard tiled floor and about ready to flatten Tim's head. When he saw someones hand grab Joe's arm lift him off his knees twirl Joe around and punched him. Joe was down on the floor right next to Tim. Tim looked to see who it was and it was Greg. Greg, Tim and Joe had to go down to the office but no one except Joe got into any trouble. Greg and Tim were happy that they were still friends.

To me friendship that really counted could never revolve around a social group of more than three members. Now the reason I feel that way is that if the relationship develops inside a large social group the following things are most likely to happen: 1)The friendship was made as a person looked for social support 2)The relationship for that reason alway's hinges on weather each member does the "Cool" things, if not the relationship ends so the other member will not be dragged down socially with him or her. The best relationships, where people are realy friends are not effected by what society see's as "Cool", often these are the lasting relation ships.

I have quite a few friends but I only have two friends that are what I like to call "True Friends". I spend alot of time with these two people, the three of us are very much alike. We do not care what other people (society) think about us. Our relationship is not goverened by the opions of people outside our group. The activity's that we get involved in do not alway reflect society's view of "Cool". When you really have a good friend you will know if he or she hears negitive staments about you and defends you and still chooses to asociate with you.

The things you like to do for fun are most likely going to effect the People you choose to be your friends. If these people are going to turn out to be good friends you will most likely have alot in-common. For example: I love to fish , hike, hunting. Just be outside and prgraming computers. The two really good friends that I have share most if not all of these interests. By interests I mean the things you would most likely do in your spare time. What I have written here does not nessarsely mean Social friends are bad, I have alot of them. The best way to tell if you have a Social friend is to listen to the way he talks about you when your the subject of riticule. If he's really your friend he will stick up for you. Social friends will sometimes back stab you. Your good friends do not care what others think of you. Only what you think of them. Sometimes people only have one kind of friend Social or True.

Personaly I like True Friends better then Social friends. I feel I can trust them better. I know they really like who I am not what I am I feel and hope that every one should have at least <u>one</u> true friend.

I had a friend, now all I have is shadows of our friendship trapped in my mind. We lost touch and walked on seperate paths but I knew we would never meet again We were always there for each other. Then we turned our backs leaving the other alone Now we walk in the dark for we each lit the others way. All the lights are and i'm feeling very alone. Alone with only the memories. I cried upon her shoulder and likewise she on mine, and now I know

it will never be the same. We had a trust, a bond of love, but when we seperated the lock broke and we drifted away. It was the broken trust that drove us to the fork in our road. There is nothing to be done to repair such a fracture, for I know I cannot accept her apology because it will never be the same , and to expect her to accept mine, if it were given, would be setting a double standard which doese not let us be equal, and if there is no equality then there is no communication because between inferior and superior there in no bond. I will live in our memories for they were truely the happiest times of my life. There will never be any like them, because friends we will never be again. But I must say thank you for those times when you were there. Maybe our bond was to tight, we lived in a world of you and I and no other. Together we said we would remain, you and I against the world. Thank you for your love and for our times. But now it is goodbye forever. But always remember our memories For now and forever it is all we will ever have

SCORE POINT 1

Numerous errors in usage and grammar, spelling, capitalization and/or punctuation consistently distract the reader, taking attention away from the writer's message and severely impairing readability.

* The student shows very limited understanding of or ability to apply conventions.
* Errors in grammar and usage are frequent and tend to be very noticeable.
* Basic punctuation may be omitted, haphazard, or just plain wrong.
* Capitalization is often incorrect or highly inconsistent.
* Spelling errors tend to be frequent, even on common words.
* Paragraphing is illogical or arbitrary (e.g., paragraphs almost never seem to begin in the right places.)

SCORE POINT 1 SAMPLE PAPERS

The last papers represent those that were rated low in Conventions. The frequent errors are distracting and diminish the reader's understanding of the story.

Friends I have not. My life has been dull, lonely and, very boring. Since I could rember my so called friends would put me down and say dum little song about me.

But their was one time a friend helped if you could call it that. It was usaul day in Kodiak (rainy and cold). I was waiting for the bell to ring and fellow students were sitting down and talking away. When all of the sudden I broke into the gab session and started to talking like a run away frieght train. People all around me were telling me to shut up and sit down. Then it happened some one a stupid comment and I jumped at the chance to put him down. He was turning red from my long lives of cut downs. He got lower and lower in his seat.

Then Mr. _____ walked in and told me to settle down and be guite. I couldn't help it my mouth wouldn't stop. Then it happened on of my so called friends hit me as hard he could. I hit the ground with a thud, got back up and my mouth was fixed. I started jumping up down. Not because I was happy but only becase my jaw was dislocated and a few loose teth. But actaully I've got one real friend but all he does is swim around in a glass jar.

We all need a friend, once or twice in a lifetime, or for the rest of your life. I'm going to tell a story about me and my best friend Sara, who helped me out hen I got pregnate.

It was a nice summers eve, when me and Sara went out for a walk. And I had to tell her something that she couldn't tell anyone and I was counting on her to help me out.

I told her I was pregnate and she reached out to me and held me like a baby, while I told her the whole story of what had happened. And she cried with me for fear of what might happen to me. for an hour we discussed what we thought was going to happen and what I was going to tell the people I care about most. Especially the father of the child.

The next day, she went with me to tell him (the father), and he didn't believe me! I got real pissed off, and told him what I thought. That was also the day we broke up. He left and I have an idea of where he went but not a good one.

So now it was up to me and Sara to tell my parents, and so we did. They weren't too happy about it at first, but now that they are grandparents they are as happy as can be.

Now, me, Sara and my son do everything together, possible. And me and Sara are still the best of friends and will always be

Everyone needs a friend now and then, but at a time like that, especially when your to young to understand, a friend is always needed.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Participating Districts and Contact Teachers

1989 Intra-district Writing Assessment Pilot

Teachers

Kenai
Lois Jones
Homer High School
600 E. Fairview Avenue
Homer, Alaska 99669

Ketchikan
Pat Hunt
Ketchikan High School
Pouch Z
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Railbelt*
Arlie Swett
Tri-Valley school
Drawer 280
Healy, Alaska 99743

Sitka
Gayle Hammonds
Sitka High School
1000 Lake Street Extension
Sitka, Alaska 99835

Kuspuk
Bambi Phipps
Sleetmute School
Box 69
Sleetmute, Alaska 99668

Anchorage*
Sandra Parker
East High School
4025 E. 24th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

Southeast Island
Suzan Bolling
P.O. Box 8340
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Iditarod
Deane O'Dell
Box 90
McGrath, Alaska 99627

Northwest Arctic
Patty Irwin
Kotzebue High School
Box 264
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752

Kodiak*
Mike Sirofchuck
Kodiak High School
722 Mill Bay Road
Kodiak, Alaska 99615

Fairbanks
Carol Merritt
West Valley High School
Box 1250
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707

Valdez
Hilarie Meadows
Herman Hutchens Junior High
Box 398
Valdez, Alaska 99686

Lower Kuskokwim
Joe Slatts
Atmautluak High School
General Delivery
Atmautluak, Alaska 99559

*Will participate in parts I & II of the study.

Appendix B

Early Training Session Agenda

WRITING ASSESSMENT TRAINERS' WORKSHOP

Presented by Interwest Applied Research
February 13-15, 1986
Juneau, Alaska

Thursday, 2/13

8:45-9:30	Introductions and Writing Warm-up
9:30-9:45	Status of Writing Assessment in U.S.
9:45-10:15	Holistic, Primary Trait and Analytical Scoring: Similarities and Differences
10:15-10:25	Break
10:25-10:45	Establishing Your Own Analytical Scoring Guide
10:45-11:15	Review and Critique of Sample Scoring Guides
11:15-11:45	Begin Review of Model Rubric
11:45-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:45	Continue Review of Model Rubric Using Sample Student Papers
1:45-2:00	Break
2:00-4:30	Group Scoring Practice with Pre-scored Papers
4:30	Adjourn

Friday, 2/14

8:15-8:35	Writing Warm-up
8:35-10:35	Continue Group Scoring Practice: Alaska Participants Direct Activities
10:35-10:45	Break
10:45-11:45	Continue Group Scoring Practice
11:45-12:15	Debrief Scoring Experience
12:15-1:00	Lunch
1:00-1:30	How to Deal with Problem Solving Situations
1:30-2:15	The Reliability Issue
2:15-2:45	Logistics of Running a Large-scale Writing Assessment
2:45-3:00	Break
3:00-5:00	Prompt Development and Critique
5:00	Adjourn

Appendix C

Definitions of Scoring Methods

Writing Assessment Trainers' Workshop

TYPES OF SCORING DEFINITIONS

Holistic Scoring

Holistic scoring--based on the premise that the whole is more than the sum of the parts--involved reading a paper for an overall or "whole" impression. While specific traits such as organization, syntax and originality undoubtedly influence a reader's judgment, none of these traits is directly, individually addressed. What matters is how all traits are orchestrated by the writer--how the whole thing works together. A reader makes a judgment in much the same way that he or she decides whether a novel or an essay in Time magazine is superior, mediocre or slipshod. Raters use model papers (sometimes called range finders) to help them assign scores. The objective is to score quickly and to trust one's first impression without extensive head scratching or deliberation.

Primary Trait Scoring

Primary trait scoring is based on the premise that all writing is done for an audience, and that successful writing will have the desired effect upon the audience. For example, a successful letter to a senator will persuade her to accept the writer's point of view. A successful set of instructions on assembling a bicycle will be clear and well ordered so that the reader doesn't end up building an umbrella rack. Raters may use written guidelines, model papers, or both.

Pitfall: It's hard to score one trait and ignore others. Where does one trait stop and the next begin?

Analytical Scoring

Analytical scoring is based on the premise that it is possible to define the components of good writing, and that further, a piece of writing may be excellent in one respect while revealing significant weaknesses in others. For example, a paper may be mechanically sound but weak in ideas, or may reflect an exceptional vocabulary but rather weak organization.

Analytical scoring involved isolating and defining the characteristics of writing and scoring them individually. This alternative is most appropriate if one wants to measure students' ability to deal with individual components of writing: ideas, organization, word choice, and so on. Readers rely on written guidelines (together with model papers, usually) in assigning scores. Analytical scoring is a combination of criterion based and normative based rating. It is the only one of the three systems to offer students any significant amount of specific information on which to base revision, or to offer instructors any specific, comprehensive guidelines for instruction.

All scoring approaches have validity, and each has a place--depending on the purpose for which one is rating or evaluating students' papers.

A Comparison of Scoring Methods for Direct Writing Assessment

DESCRIPTOR	HOLISTIC	ANALYTIC	PRIMARY TRAIT	WRITING MECHANICS
GENERAL CAPABILITIES	Comprehensive, general picture of student performance; writing viewed as a unified coherent whole. Applicable to any writing task.	Thorough, trait by trait analysis of writing; provides comprehensive picture of performance *if* enough traits are analyzed; traits are those important to *any* piece of writing in *any* situation (e.g., organization, wording, mechanics).	Highly focused analysis of situation-specific primary trait (and possibly secondary traits); provides specific information on a narrowly defined writing task (e.g., ability to recount details in chronological order).	Can provide either a general or a specific profile of the student's ability to use mechanics properly.
RELIABILITY	High reliability if standards are carefully established and raters are carefully trained.	High reliability if criteria and standards are well defined, and careful training is conducted.	High reliability if criteria and standards are well defined, and careful training is conducted.	High reliability if given sufficient training time and authoritative, complete, acceptable guidelines (e.g., an English handbook).
PREPARATION TIME	Up to one day per item to identify range finder (model) papers; up to one-half day to train readers using 4-point scale; full day to train with 8-point scale.	One full day to identify traits; one day per trait to develop scoring criteria (unless traits and criteria are borrowed from another source); one to two days to review results of pilot test and refine traits or criteria as necessary; one-half day to train raters.	One full day to identify traits; one day per trait to develop scoring criteria (unless traits and criteria are borrowed from another source); one to two days to review results of pilot test and refine traits or criteria as necessary; one-half day to train raters.	One to two days to set up a scoring system (unless borrowed from another source). Minimum of one day to internalize the scoring system and practice scoring.
READERS	Qualified language arts personnel recommended; high reliability can be achieved with non-language arts readers given sufficient training.	Qualified language arts personnel recommended.	Qualified language arts personnel recommended; non-language arts staff may be able to score some traits.	Qualified language arts personnel recommended.
SCORING TIME	One to two minutes per paper (experienced readers may read faster).	One to two minutes per paper per trait.	One to two minutes per paper per trait.	Five minutes or more per paper, depending on number of criteria.
CLASSROOM USE	May be adapted for use in class.	May be adapted for use in class.	May be adapted for use in class.	May be adapted for use in class.
REPORTING	Allows reporting on students' overall writing skill.	Allows reporting of student performance on wide range of generalizable traits (i.e., the qualities considered important to all good writing).	Allows reporting of student performance on one or more situation-specific traits important to a particular task.	Allows reporting of group or individual data on students' general strengths or weaknesses in mechanics.
GROUP/ SAMPLE SIZE*	Primarily usable with a larger sample; with a small sample, responses may be difficult to scale.	Best with smaller samples; extensive scoring time *may* make costs prohibitive with larger groups.	Generally more cost-effective with smaller samples, depending on the number of traits to be scored (with one trait, sample size is not an issue).	Best with smaller samples; extensive scoring time *may* make costs prohibitive with larger groups.

*These are very general guidelines. Due to the nature of the scoring-cost/amount-of-information trade-off across scoring methods, readers are urged to seek the technical assistance of a qualified writing assessment specialist if there is a question regarding the appropriate use of available scoring resources.

Source: *Direct Measures of Writing Skill: Issues and Applications*, Revised Edition, by Vicki Spandel and Rick Stiggins. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1981.

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Appendix D

Analytical Scoring Guide

Analytical Rating Guide

IDEAS AND CONTENT

5 This paper is clear in purpose and conveys ideas in an interesting, original manner that holds the reader's attention. Often, the writing develops as a process of discovery for both reader and writer. Clear, relevant examples, anecdotes or details develop and enrich the central idea or ideas.

- –The writer seems to be writing what he or she knows, often from experience.
- –The writer shows insight–a good sense of the world, people, situations.
- –The writing is often enlivened by spontaneity or a fresh, individual perspective.
- –The writer selects supportive, relevant details that keep the main idea(s) in focus.
- –Primary and secondary ideas are developed in proportion to their significance; the writing has a sense of balance.
- –The writer seems in control of the topic and its development throughout.

3 The writer's purpose is reasonably clear; however, the overall result may not be especially captivating. Support is less than adequate to fully develop the main idea(s).

- –The reader may not be convinced of the writer's knowledge of the topic.
- –The writer seems to have considered ideas, but not thought things through all the way.
- –Ideas, though reasonably clear and comprehensible, may tend toward the mundane; the reader is not sorry to see the paper end.
- –Supporting details tend to be skimpy, general, predictable, or repetitive. Some details seem included by chance, not selected through careful discrimination.
- –Writing sometimes lacks balance: e.g., too much attention to minor details, insufficient development of main ideas, informational gaps.
- –The writer's control of the topic seems inconsistent or uncertain.

1 This paper lacks a central idea or purpose–or the central idea can be inferred by the reader only because he or she knows the topic (question asked).

- –Information is very limited (e.g., restatement of the prompt, heavy reliance on repetition) or simply unclear altogether.
- –Insight is limited or lacking (e.g., details that do not ring true; dependence on platitudes or stereotypes).
- –Paper lacks balance; development of ideas is minimal, or there may be a list of random thoughts from which no central theme emerges.
- –Writing tends to read like a rote response–merely an effort to get something down on paper.
- –The writer does not seem in control of the topic; shorter papers tend to go nowhere, longer papers to wander aimlessly.

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Analytical Rating Guide

ORGANIZATION

5 The writer organizes material in a way that enhances the reader's understanding, or that helps to develop a central idea or theme. The order may be conventional or not, but the sequence is effective and moves the reader through the paper.

- –Details seem to fit where they're placed, and the reader is not left with the sense that "something is missing."
- –The writer provides a clear sense of beginning and ending, with an inviting introduction and a satisfying conclusion ("satisfying" in the sense that the reader feels the paper has ended at the right spot).
- –Transitions work well; the writing shows unity and cohesion, both within paragraphs and as a whole.
- –Organization flows so smoothly that the reader doesn't have to think about it.

3 The writer attempts to organize ideas and details cohesively, but the resulting pattern may be somewhat unclear, ineffective, or awkward. Although the reader can generally follow what's being said, the organizational structure may seem at times to be forced, obvious, incomplete or ineffective.

- –The writer seems to have a sense of beginning and ending, but the introduction and/or conclusion tend to be less effective than desired.
- –The order may not be a graceful fit with the topic (e.g., a forced conventional pattern, or lack of structure).
- –The writer may miss some opportunities for transitions, requiring the reader to make assumptions or inferences.
- –Placement or relevance of some details may be questionable (e.g., interruptive information; writer gets to the point in roundabout fashion).
- –While some portions of the paper may seem unified (e.g., organization within a given paragraph may be acceptable), cohesion of the whole may be weak.

1 Organization is haphazard and disjointed. The writing shows little or no sense of progression or direction. Examples, details, or events seem unrelated to any central idea, or may be strung together helter-skelter with no apparent pattern.

- –There is no clear sense of a beginning or ending.
- –Transitions are very weak or absent altogether.
- –Arrangement of details is confusing or illogical.
- –There are noticeable information "gaps"; the reader is left dangling, or cannot readily see how the writer got from one point to another.
- –The paper lacks unity and solidarity.

Analytical Rating Guide

VOICE

5 The paper bears the unmistakable stamp of the individual writer. The writer speaks directly to the reader, and seems sincere, candid and committed to the topic. The overall effect is individualistic, expressive and engaging; this paper stands out from the others.

- –The reader feels an interaction with the writer, and through the writing, gains a sense of what the writer is like.
- –The paper is honest. There is a real effort to communicate, even when it means taking a risk (e.g., an unexpected approach or revealing of self).
- –The writing is natural and compelling.
- –Tone is appropriate and consistently controlled.
- –The writer's own enthusiasm or interest comes through and brings the topic to life.

3 The writer makes an honest effort to deal with the topic, but without a strong sense of personal commitment or involvement. The result is often pleasant or acceptable, yet not striking or compelling in a way that draws the reader in.

- –The reader has only an occasional or limited sense of interaction with the writer.
- –Writer may seem self-conscious or unwilling to take a risk–may seem to be writing what he/she thinks the reader wants.
- –Paper lacks individuality, or the ring of conviction.
- –The writing communicates, but only in a routine, predictable fashion that tends to make it blend in with the efforts of others.
- –Voice may be inconsistent; it may emerge strongly on occasion, only to shift or even disappear altogether.

1 The writer may not have understood the assignment, or may simply have felt indifferent toward the topic. As a result, no clear voice emerges. The result is flat, lifeless, very mechanical and stilted, or possibly inappropriate.

- –The reader has no sense that this writer was "writing to be read," and experiences virtually no writer-reader interaction.
- –The writing has virtually no individual personality or character; there is no identifiable voice behind the words.
- –There is little or no evidence of the writer's involvement in the topic.

Analytical Rating Guide

WORD CHOICE

5 The writer consistently selects words that convey the intended message in an interesting, precise and natural way. The result is full and rich, yet not overwhelming; every word carries its own weight.

- –Words are specific, accurate, and suited to the subject. Imagery is strong.
- –Lively, powerful verbs give the writing energy, visual appeal, and clarity.
- –Vocabulary may be striking, colorful, or unusual–but the language isn't overdone.
- –Expression is fresh and appealing, fun to read. The writer uses cliches or slang sparingly, and only for effect.
- –The writer may experiment with uncommon words, or use common words in a delightful way.
- –Figurative language, if used, is effective.

3 The writer's word choice is adequate to convey meaning, but the language tends toward the ordinary. The writer doesn't consistently reach for the "best" way to say something, but instead often settles for the first word or phrase that comes to mind. The result is a sort of "generic paper" that sounds familiar, routine, or commonplace.

- –Language communicates quite well, but without a sense of satisfying fullness or power; the reader has the feeling it could have been written better.
- –Imagery may be weakened by overuse of abstract, general language.
- –Though the reader can interpret the meaning quite readily, some words lack precision or vigor.
- –Attempts at the unusual, colorful or difficult are not always successful. The language may seem overdone or calculated to impress rather than natural.
- –Though an occasional phrase may catch the reader's eye, cliches, redundancies and hackneyed phrases pop up with disappointing frequency; there are few surprises or enticing twists.

1 The writer is struggling with a limited vocabulary, often groping for words and phrases to convey meaning. Meaning may be difficult to determine (e.g., the writer says one thing but seems to mean another), or else the language is so vague and abstract that only the broadest, most general sorts of messages are conveyed.

- –Writing is often characterized by monotonous repetition, overwhelming reliance on worn, threadbare expressions, or heavy reliance on the prompt (topic) itself for key words and phrases.
- –Imagery is very weak or absent; the reader lacks sufficient concrete details to construct any mental picture.
- –Words tend to be consistently dull, colorless and trite.
- –In some instances, word choice may seem careless, imprecise, or just plain wrong.

Analytical Rating Guide

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

5 The paper is fluid, and reads easily throughout. It has an easy-on-the ear flow and rhythm when read aloud. Sentences have a strong and rhetorically effective structure that makes reading enjoyable.

- –Sentence structure clearly conveys meaning, with no ambiguity.
- –Writing sounds natural and fluent, with effective phrasing.
- –Sentences are appropriately concise.
- –Varied sentence structure and length add interest.
- –Fragments, if used, are stylistically appropriate. They seem right.

3 Sentences are understandable, but tend to be mechanical rather than fluid. While sentences are usually correct, the paper is not characterized by a natural fluency and grace. Occasional flaws or awkward constructions may necessitate re-reading.

- –Sentence structure sometimes clearly conveys meaning–and sometimes not. Structural problems may sometimes create ambiguity.
- –Some sentences lack energy, character or effectiveness (e.g., they may be hampered by awkward structure, unnecessary complexity, roundabout expression, wordiness, dangling modifiers, ineffective use of passive voice, or repetitious beginnings–"I did this," "I did that").
- –Sentence variety (length or structure) tends to be more the exception than the rule.
- –Fragments, if used, may sometimes be ineffective or confusing.

1 The writing is generally awkward and therefore hard to read aloud. It does not sound natural. Sentences tend to be choppy, incomplete, or so rambling and irregular that it may be difficult to tell where one should end and the next begin.

- – Because sentence structure frequently does not function to convey meaning, reader may pause several times to question what is meant.
- – Sentences lack both fluency and correctness. The writer may not write in conventional sentences at all. Or, sentences may seem stiffly constructed, disjointed, endlessly meandering (e.g., many run-ons), or nonsensical.
- – Short, choppy sentences relentlessly monotonous rhythms or patterns (e.g., subject-verb or subject-verb-object over and over) that produce a jarring or sing-song effect.
- – Fragments are confusing or ineffective. Writer seems to have little grasp of how words fit together, or of where one idea logically stops and the next begins.

Analytical Rating Guide

WRITING CONVENTIONS

5 The writer's skillful use of standard writing conventions (grammar, capitalization, punctuation, usage, spelling, paragraphing) enhances readability. There are no glaring errors. In fact, while the paper may not be flawless, errors tend to be *so* minor that the reader can easily overlook them unless searching for them specifically. (Deliberate, controlled deviations from convention–in dialogue, for instance–are acceptable, provided they enhance the overall effect.)

- –Grammar (e.g., noun-verb agreement; noun-pronoun agreement; verb tense; forms of nouns, verbs, pronouns and modifiers) is essentially correct.
- –Punctuation is smooth and enhances meaning. Informalities, such as dashes or contractions, are allowed.
- –Spelling is generally correct, even on more difficult words.
- –Usage is generally correct, or acceptable given the purpose of the writing. The writer avoids double negatives (e.g., *couldn't hardly*) and nonstandard usage (e.g., *could of* been, *more better*, she *had ought* to do it, *irregardless*, *leave me* figure this out). Informalities (e.g., *you will find* rather than the more formal *one will find*) are acceptable.
- –Paragraphing (i.e., indenting) works in harmony with the inherent organization of the paper.

3 Errors in writing conventions are noticeable and begin to impair readability. Reader can follow what is being said overall, but may need to pause or re-read on occasion.

- –Occasional problems in grammar disrupt the flow of the writing. For example, agreement may be inconsistent; or there may be shifts in tense, improper verb forms (e.g., *lay down* here), improper pronoun forms (*theirselves*, *me and Jim* will go), use of adjectives for adverbs (he did *good*), and so on.
- –Punctuation, capitalization and spelling errors may be sufficiently frequent or serious to momentarily distract the reader.
- –Some usage problems (e.g., double negatives, use of nonstandard expressions such as *irregardless*) may be evident.
- –Paragraphing is attempted, but paragraphs may not always begin at the right places. As a result, paragraph structure (indenting) does not always complement the paper's inherent organization.

1 Numerous errors in usage and grammar, spelling, capitalization and/or punctuation consistently distract the reader, taking attention away from the writer's message and severely impairing readability.

- –The student shows very limited understanding of or ability to apply conventions.
- –Errors in grammar and usage are frequent and tend to be very noticeable.
- –Basic punctuation may be omitted, haphazard, or just plain wrong.
- –Capitalization is often incorrect or highly inconsistent.
- –Spelling errors tend to be frequent, even on common words.
- –Paragraphing is illogical or arbitrary (e.g., paragraphs almost never seem to begin in the right places.)

Appendix E

Department of Education Letters and Instructions to Teachers and Students

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM SUPPORT

STEVE COWPER, GOVERNOR

GOLDBELT PLACE
801 WEST 10TH STREET
P.O. BOX F
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0500

February 1989

Dear 10th Grade Students:

Thanks for agreeing to participate in the first inter-district writing assessment. The State Board of Education, legislators, Department of Education staff, parents and educators are all interested in the writing abilities of high school students in our state. We are doing this pilot involving 60 sophomores from 15 different districts. Teachers will score the writing using the same scoring guide to look at each paper. Individual names will be confidential.

A final report describing how the total group did will be written during the summer of 1989. This report will be presented to the State School Board at their August meeting and it will also go to other interested citizens and policy-makers throughout the state. Based on what we learn about the strengths and weaknesses in writing skills, we then hope to improve the ways we teach and the ways you learn.

Again, thanks for your cooperation and your best efforts.

Sincerely,

Annie Calkins

Annie Calkins
Language Arts Specialist
Office of Basic Education

899ARC

05-E13LH

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM SUPPORT

STEVE COWPER, GOVERNOR

GOLDBELT PLACE
801 WEST 10TH STREET
P.O. BOX F
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0500

February 1989

Dear Alaskan Teachers:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the 1989 Inter-district Writing Assessment Pilot. The Department of Education and the Alaska State Writing Consortium have been working toward such a pilot for the last five years and we are pleased to see it actually happen in 1989!

There are fifteen districts participating in this assessment, each sampling up to sixty 10th grade students. One teacher from each district has been designated as the key contact teacher and will participate in the training and actual scoring of the papers, using an analytical rubric.

Your job in this pilot is to administer the agreed upon writing prompt to your 10th grade students on the two days your district has agreed upon, between March 27 and April 7, 1989. You will then make sure your district's teacher contact receives those papers before April 7 when the group scoring will begin in Anchorage. More detailed directions follow.

Again, thank you for your cooperation and time and for taking the time out of your curriculum in order for your students to participate. We think this is a valuable project and hope to learn much about the writing skills of some high school students in Alaska. If you are interested, a final report describing the pilot and summary will be finalized by August 1989, and will be available through us at the Department of Education.

Sincerely,

Annie Calkins

Annie Calkins
Language Arts Specialist
Office of Basic Education

Bob Silverman

Bob Silverman
Supervisor
Office of Data Management

Enclosures: Teacher Instructions
Student Instructions
Letter to Students

91

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1989 Writing Assessment

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

1. In consultation with the writing assessment teacher contact for your district, determine which two days you will administer the sample. These two days should be sequential.

2. Several days before the writing sample is to take place, verbally inform the students that they will be participating and writing.

3. The day before the writing, distribute the letter to the 10th graders who will participate.

4. The day before the writing, make sure each student has:

   - blue or black pen or #2 hard pencil (pencil does not xerox well and it smudges) to write with
   - white, 8 ½ x 11" lined paper to write on (at least 6-8 pages per student)
   - access to dictionaries, thesauruses (try to have at least one dictionary and thesaurus for every ten students)
   - arrange seating so each student has room for his/her papers and note and enough space for comfortable writing.

5. On Day One of the pilot:

   - put a sign up on your door so no one will disturb the students
   - hand out the Student Instruction Sheet
   - read the directions for Day 1 aloud to the students
   - answer any questions they might have
   - time the students, allowing only a 50 minute writing period
   - collect all papers at the end of the period, including the signed instruction sheet
   - make sure the signed instruction sheet is stapled to the top of each rough draft

6. On Day 2 of the pilot:

   - re-distribute the student papers from yesterday including the Student Instruction Sheet which is now on top
   - read the instructions for Day 2 aloud to the students
   - answer any questions they may have
   - time the students writing, allowing only a 50 minute time period
   - at the end of the period collect all papers from the students. Final draft should be stapled to the Student Instruction Sheet and the rough copy. To insure that scoring is objective, we do not want students' names on the draft or final copy itself.

7. Thank the students for their best efforts and cooperation. Tell them that their papers will be returned to them in late April, with comments from the evaluators/scorers.

8. Send or give the signed Student Instruction Sheets and the papers which the students have written and stapled to the Instruction Sheet to the teacher contact in your district.

9. THANK YOU for your time and facilitation!

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

The following directions tell you how to produce your writing sample for the Tenth Grade Alaska Assessment Writing. Read them carefully, and ask your teacher if you have any questions or find any part of them unclear.

There will be no grades given for your paper, and there are no right or wrong answers. Every student's paper will be different from everyone else's. The scores you get back will tell you what particular strengths your paper has, and where there is the most need for improvement.

TOPIC:

We all need friends. Describe a time in your life (either real or imaginary) when friendship really counted. The people you describe may be real or imaginary.

Day 1

Today you will spend 50 minutes brainstorming independently and writing a rough draft of your paper. Write your essay on the topic given above - not on any other topic. It's important that you put forth your best effort in your writing, as your teacher will not be allowed to help you in any way. This is YOUR best writing sample.

Take time to think about how you will organize what you have to say as you write. Produce a clear, well-organized essay, using your best written English. You may use either pen or pencil for your rough draft.

Write on one side of the paper only, using as many sheets as needed. Make your handwriting or printing as clear and easy to read as possible. You may use a dictionary or thesaurus if you need to. Your rough draft will be collected at the end of this period, so be sure your name is on each page.

Your writing will be evaluated in the following areas:

- ideas - organization - how you develop your ideas

- voice - word choice - sentence structure - writing mechanics

---

Name: _____

School: _____

Age: _____

Date: _____

District Code: _____

Code: _____

899ARC

Day 2

You will write for 50 minutes, revising and finalizing your draft. Make as many corrections or changes you wish. Use a dictionary or thesaursus if you want to. After you have finished copying, read your paper at least once before you hand it in and correct any errors you spot. If you do not finish re-copying the rough draft into final form by the end of the period, please indicate you did not finish at the bottom of the last page. **Do not write your name on the final copy.**

Please include a copy of your rough draft(s) along with your final copy, and staple these pages to this sheet. Two specifically trained raters will score your paper. Your scores will be returned to you in early May. Thank you again for sharing your writing sample with us.

Appendix F

Participating Teachers' Comments

Comments from 1989 Participating Teachers

Writing is an integrated skill greater than the sum of its parts, we need to assess this "whole" every bit as much as we need to give standardized tests in language arts.

Statewide assessment lends power to each district's efforts and encourages more work in this area.

The (refresher) training in analytical assessment, without the distraction of home and work, gives me renewed energy and insight for my writing classes. I also got several hot ideas on the logistics of the process which I'll suggest we incorporate next year in Fairbanks. Working through the readings with the others helped me get a feel for what kind of high school writing is "out there," and this is a valuable piece of learning too.

Teachers, students, parents and administrators can get a more complete and defined picture of the students' balance of strengths and weaknesses to better aid in instruction. Instruction can be more specific and beneficial, focusing in on the areas of need while building upon the strengths.

Where do our students stand with their writing skills? How do we go about evaluating this skill? Obviously standardized "bubble" tests don't address these questions.

By assessing writing on a district and state level we are saying that strong writing is important.

The feedback on their papers, when combined with other forms, will add to the reality of their self-perceptions as writers.

This has been valuable for me, to see that writing is much more consistent across the state than I would have guessed.

I believe a statewide direct assessment should be the ASWC and DOE goal.

The paper is evaluated in terms students would understand.

We are finally measuring what counts.

In my mind a strong voice is the single greatest talent of an exceptional writer. It isn't measured on a standardized test.

Appendix G

Contingency Tables

Contingency Table 1: Ideas Average and NCE

Coded Chi-Square X_1 : Recode of ideas avg. Y_1 : Categor/Stand.

Summary Statistics

DF:	12	
Total Chi-Square:	64.493	p=1.0000E-4
G Statistic:	63.667	
Contingency Coefficient:	.378	
Cramer's V:	.235	

1

Observed Frequency Table

	low	low/med	medium	med/high	high	Totals:
quartile 1	7	25	18	9	1	60
quartile 2	3	39	36	17	5	100
quartile 3	2	25	30	36	9	102
quartile 4	2	19	28	62	15	126
Totals:	14	108	112	124	30	388

2

Contingency Table 2: Organization Average and NCE

Coded Chi-Square X_1 : Recode of organ. avg. Y_1 : Categor/Stand.

Summary Statistics

DF:	12	
Total Chi-Square:	70.986	p=1.0000E-4
G Statistic:	•	
Contingency Coefficient:	.393	
Cramer's V:	.247	

1

Observed Frequency Table

	low	low/med	medium	med/high	high	Totals:
quartile 1	5	37	14	4	0	60
quartile 2	6	44	34	14	2	100
quartile 3	3	31	30	33	5	102
quartile 4	1	28	29	56	12	126
Totals:	15	140	107	107	19	388

2

Contingency Table 3: Voice Average and NCE

Coded Chi-Square X_1 : Recode of voice avg. Y_1 : Categor/Stand.

Summary Statistics

DF:	12	
Total Chi-Square:	69.296	p=1.0000E-4
G Statistic:	•	
Contingency Coefficient:	.389	
Cramer's V:	.244	

1

Observed Frequency Table

	low	low/med	medium	med/high	high	Totals:
quartile 1	2	25	18	15	0	60
quartile 2	2	25	40	27	6	100
quartile 3	0	22	31	31	18	102
quartile 4	0	8	29	65	24	126
Totals:	4	80	118	138	48	388

2

Contingency Table 4: Word Choice Average and NCE

Coded Chi-Square X_1 : Recode of word choice avg. Y_1 : Categor/Stand.

Summary Statistics

DF:	12	
Total Chi-Square:	81.774	p=1.0000E-4
G Statistic:	•	
Contingency Coefficient:	.417	
Cramer's V:	.265	

1

Observed Frequency Table

	low	low/med	medium	med/high	high	Totals:
quartile 1	4	27	26	3	0	60
quartile 2	1	29	54	13	3	100
quartile 3	0	23	48	26	5	102
quartile 4	0	16	43	57	10	126
Totals:	5	95	171	99	18	388

2

Contingency Table 5: Sentence Structure Average and NCE

Coded Chi-Square X_1 : Recode of sent. struc avg. Y_1 : Categor/Stand.

Summary Statistics

DF:	12	
Total Chi-Square:	100.598	p=1.0000E-4
G Statistic:	•	
Contingency Coefficient:	454	
Cramer's V:	294	

1

Observed Frequency Table

	low	low/med	medium	med/high	high	Totals:
quartile 1	8	30	18	4	0	60
quartile 2	5	39	33	22	1	100
quartile 3	2	18	39	39	4	102
quartile 4	0	15	33	63	15	126
Totals:	15	102	123	128	20	388

2

Contingency Table 6: Writing Conventions Average and NCE

Coded Chi-Square X_1 : Recode of convent. avg. Y_1 : Categor/Stand.

Summary Statistics

DF:	12	
Total Chi-Square:	94.678	p=1.0000E-4
G Statistic:	•	
Contingency Coefficient:	.443	
Cramer's V:	.285	

1

Observed Frequency Table

	low	low/med	medium	med/high	high	Totals:
quartile 1	11	36	10	3	0	60
quartile 2	10	32	32	23	3	100
quartile 3	2	27	36	32	5	102
quartile 4	1	20	34	55	16	126
Totals:	24	115	112	113	24	388

2

Contingency Table 7: Total Writing Average and NCE

Coded Chi-Square X_1 : Recode of total writing avg. Y_1 : Categor/Stand.

Summary Statistics

DF	12	
Total Chi-Square	104.425	p=1.0000E-4
G Statistic	•	
Contingency Coefficient	.461	
Cramer's V	3	

1

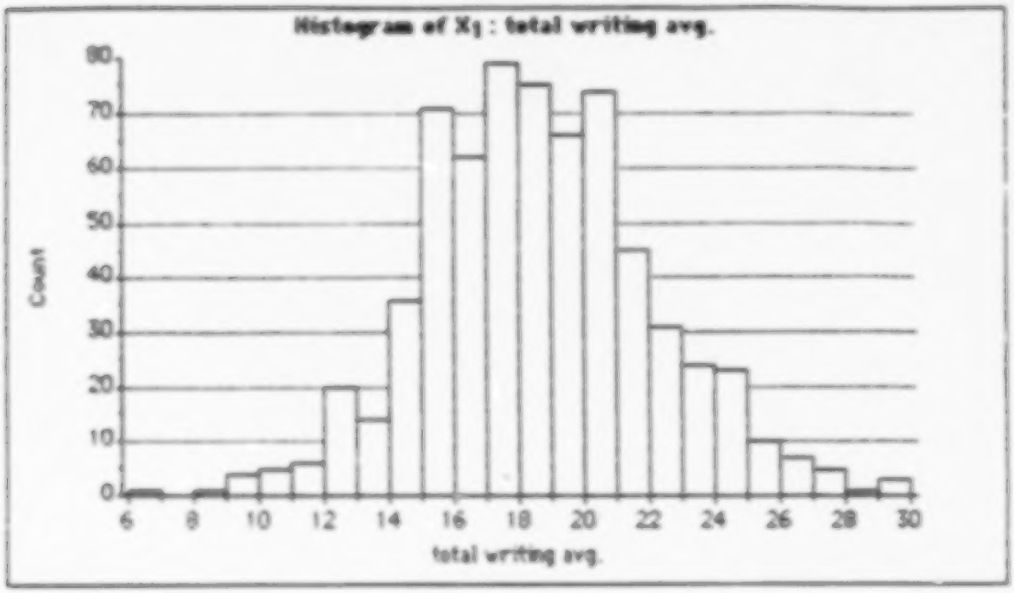
Observed Frequency Table

	low	med/low	medium	med/high	high	Totals:
quartile 1	5	34	18	3	0	60
quartile 2	5	31	43	21	0	100
quartile 3	0	24	41	35	2	102
quartile 4	0	13	34	73	6	126
Totals:	10	102	136	132	8	388

2

APPENDIX H

Interdistrict Writing Assessment Statistics



X_1 : total writing avg.

Mean:	Std. Dev.:	Std. Error:	Variance:	Coef. Var:	Count:
18.327	3.521	.137	12.399	19.213	663
Minimum:	**Maximum:**	**Range:**	**Sum:**	**Sum Squared:**	**# Missing:**
6	29.5	23.5	12151	230903	5

Correlation Matrix for Variables: X_1 _ X_7

	ideas avg.	organ. a...	voice avg.	word ch...	sent. str...	convent...	total wr...
ideas avg.	1						
organ. avg.	.737	1					
voice avg.	.714	641	1				
word cho...	628	589	65	1			
sent. str...	551	634	491	61	1		
convent....	436	564	403	534	.762	1	
total wri...	833	856	.793	806	832	.766	1

Note : 5 cases deleted with missing values.